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Iron Road: The Rise of Huntington, West Virginia, 1870-1920

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IRON ROAD: THE RISE OF HUNTINGTON, WEST VIRGINIA, 1870-1920

A thesis submitted to
the Graduate College of
Marshall University
In partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of the Arts

In
History

by

Brooks Bryant

Approved by

Dr. Daniel U. Holbrook, Chairperson

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May 2018

APPROVAL OF THESIS

We, the faculty supervising the work of Brooks Bryant, affirm that the thesis, *Iron Road: The Rise of Huntington West Virginia, 1870-1920*, meets the high academic standards for original scholarship and creative work established by the History Program and the College of Liberal Arts. This work also conforms to the editorial standards of our discipline and the Graduate College of Marshall University. With our signatures, we approve the manuscript for publication.

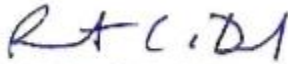


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ABSTRACT

The city of Huntington, West Virginia, did not occur gradually, nor did the city grow organically. Collis P. Huntington's purchase of the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad in the winter of 1869 led to the conception of the first new city of a State born out of the Civil War. Collis Huntington specifically chose the future site of Huntington for the terminus of the C&O Railroad to reach areas rich in coal, timber, and agriculture in West Virginia, providing natural resources a way to market. For Collis P. Huntington to profit from shipping natural resources out of West Virginia, he needed a city to ship coal, timber, and produce to markets. Likewise, for the city of Huntington to thrive, the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad needed a steady source of revenue and a population. City founders promoted bipartisanship and residents quickly aligned with that political sentiment as commercial harmony took precedence over sectional conflict. As migrants formed the city's first population and brought with them their social and cultural practices, they helped shape the beginnings of city identity. This study examines the years from 1870 to 1920 and seeks to fill a major gap in urban history by examining Huntington within the Ohio Valley. Additionally, the examination of Huntington through an Appalachian perspective also fills a major gap in that historiography. Neglected by Appalachian history, and virtually nonexistent in urban history, Huntington offers a unique study of a new nineteenth-century American city east of the Mississippi.

INTRODUCTION

“There is very great promise for the commercial future of West Virginia if an outside population can be induced to enter and improve the country.”¹ *New York Times*, July 7, 1873.

Founded in March 1870 by Collis P. Huntington, the City of Huntington, West Virginia significantly impacted the state’s politics, economy, labor industry, and culture by opening the southern coalfields, accessing virgin forests, and shipping agriculture. So where does the city of Huntington fit into American history? A typical nineteenth-century American city, Huntington remains almost wholly unexamined by urban historians.² Appalachian historiography, which tends to focus on rural areas, also ignores Huntington.³ The city’s founding and development coincide with that of western cities following the Civil War, although it is east of the Mississippi. Major themes of the Gilded Age converge in the city’s creation; while mid-western and western cities were springing up as the frontier pushed west, Huntington emerged in the Mid-Atlantic

¹ “The Two Virginias,” *New York Times*, July 07, 1873.

² For works on American urban history, see David Goldfield, *Encyclopedia of American Urban History*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2006. Jon A. Peterson, *The Birth of City Planning in the United States, 1840-1917*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003). Raymond A. Mohl, *The Making of Urban America*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997). Raymond A. Mohl, *The New City: Urban America in the Industrial Age, 1860-1920*, (Arlington Heights: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1985). Eric H. Monkkenon, *America Becomes Urban: The Development of U.S. Cities & Towns, 1780-1980*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). John William Reps, *The Making of Urban America: A History of City Planning in the United States*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965). Jon C. Teaford, *The Unheralded Triumph, City Government in America, 1870-1900*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984).

³ For works on Appalachian and West Virginia history, see Ronald L. Lewis, *Transforming the Appalachian Countryside: Railroads, Deforestation, and Social Change in West Virginia, 1880-1920*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998). Mary Beth Pudup, Dwight B. Billings, and Altina L. Waller, *Appalachia in the Making: The Mountain South in the Nineteenth Century*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000). Henry D. Shapiro, *Appalachia on Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870-1920*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986). Andrew Slap and Ken Fones-Wolf, *Reconstructing Appalachia: The Civil War's Aftermath*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2010). John Alexander Williams, *Appalachia: A History*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003). John Alexander Williams, *West Virginia: A History*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1984). Virgil A. Lewis, *History of West Virginia in Two Parts*, (Philadelphia: Hubbard Brothers Publishers, 1887-1889).

region, and in subsequent decades substantially transformed the state of West Virginia, while also contributing to the larger national economy by opening access to natural resources.

Appalachian historians often cite coal and timber as an underlying force for the social, cultural, economic, and political transformations that took place in Appalachia, especially West Virginia, but little has been written about the importance of urban areas in those transformations.⁴ Urban historians typically focus on major Eastern and Midwestern cities, and have, at a minimum, failed to differentiate between the metropolis and smaller cities in important ways.⁵ What the city of Huntington offers is a place which traverses Appalachian and urban history, in the context of the development of West Virginia and the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This work thus aims to place Huntington in the larger context of urban and Appalachian history.

The general research questions guiding this work began with; how and why did the city of Huntington form? What was the city's economic foundation? What areas of the country did the first residents come from? How did geographic migratory patterns influence the social and cultural atmosphere of the new city? How did a community of strangers react to and deal with crime? What factors played a role in the modernization of the city? What people or groups implemented the technological and infrastructural changes that transformed the city from a frontier style railroad town to a modern networked city? This work explores the years from 1870 to 1920. Chapters One and Two deal primarily with the years 1870 to 1875. Chapter Three

⁴ Lewis, *Transforming the Appalachian Countryside*, 59.

⁵ Richard M. Bernard and Bradley R. Rice, *Sunbelt Cities: Politics and Growth since World War II*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014), 255. Bernard and Rice contend that urban historians who examine western cities typically focus on the frontier and Wild West years. Michael H. Ebner, "Urban History: Retrospect and Prospect," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 68, No. 1 (Jun. 1981), pp. 69-84. Timothy R. Mahoney, "The Small City in American History," *Indiana Magazine of History*. (Dec. 2003), Vol. 99 Issue 4, p 311-330.

focuses on the years from 1871 to the 1880s, and Chapter Four examines the years from 1881 to roughly 1920.

Chapter One provides the chronology of events that led to the creation of Huntington and the ingredients that aided in the growth of a new nineteenth-century city. Travel accounts from various newspapers offer descriptions of the city and the intended goals of the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad to profit from shipping natural resources. Among other important aspects, Chapter One focuses on housing. The role of boardinghouses in Huntington's earliest years is crucial to its growth as they provided housing for migrants. Without the numerous boardinghouses, migrants might have had fewer incentives to journey to the new city. Travel accounts accentuate the chapter within each section, conveying the city's physical growth, economy, and how older cities in West Virginia reacted to Huntington. The media attention Huntington received illustrates a nation excited about a new city while also showing internal negativity from other West Virginia cities.

Chapter Two explores the emergence of city identity and how a community of strangers adhered to a bipartisan political atmosphere, forming the social, cultural, and educational foundations of Huntington. Migration patterns indicate people came from the north, south, and the Midwest. The emergence of Huntington's African American community indicates that the city adjusted to diversity relatively well. Following American cultural trends of the 1870s, early residents formed benevolent and charitable groups to improve the city. Underscoring the theme of migration patterns is the role of public education in the new city as city founders and residents supported and implemented northern educational models for Huntington's first schools. Similarly, the theme of commerce is important in this chapter as well because commercial

harmony represented part of Huntington's early city identity and took precedence over sectional conflict. Huntington was not without its problems though.

Chapter Three investigates the emergence of crime, how crimes were reported, and how residents and law enforcement alike handled crime. The memory of crime in Huntington is a central theme as false narratives surrounding certain crimes persisted through subsequent decades. More importantly, though, as seen in Chapters One and Two, the theme of commercial harmony taking precedence over sectional conflict illustrates another avenue for maintaining a peaceful atmosphere when sectional conflict resulted in the possibility of violence. Scrutinizing crime in Huntington is imperative for understanding what the city was like in its first decade due to the involvement of Huntington residents in a series of lynchings from 1875 to 1879. As a result of these lynchings, Huntingtonians experienced a sociocultural rift that widened a dynamic split between proponents of due process and frontier justice. As crime continued in the 1880s, city boosters looked to bring Huntington out of its frontier ways.

Chapter Four examines the technological and infrastructural changes that transitioned Huntington from a frontier style railroad town to a modern networked city. The role of city boosters was crucial to Huntington's modernization efforts as these early migrant residents led the way to introducing telephones, gas, electricity, running water, and electric streetcars. As city boosters implemented utilities, the municipal government played a minor role in Huntington's modernization that eventually led to an economic clash between residents and city council over unsanitary conditions. Unpaved streets and sewers marked the last hurdles Huntingtonians dealt with while modernizing the city. The installation of utilities and a mass transit system by citizens illustrates a major theme for the chapter highlighting the importance of city identity. The efforts of city boosters who played a major role in modernizing Huntington helped nurture a growing

economy and population boost from 1900 to 1920 that might not have happened if not for their cultural and technological attentiveness.

The history of Huntington illustrates the convergence of urban and Appalachian history offering the opportunity to reinforce the connections between rural resource extraction and cities as transportation hubs. For Collis P. Huntington to profit from the natural resources of West Virginia, he needed a city to ship coal, timber, and produce to markets. Likewise, for the city of Huntington to thrive, the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad needed a steady source of revenue. Huntington's early population consisted of migrants, and along with the city founders, they shaped the social and cultural atmosphere of the city. More importantly, the first Huntingtonians who congregated in an unfamiliar place, navigated uncertainty, the process of city building, adjustment to diversity, and crime, along with technological and infrastructural modernization proved they could build a city during Reconstruction. Huntington offers a rare example of a new late-nineteenth-century city east of the Mississippi, an area of urban and Appalachian history almost entirely unexplored.

The sources used to construct this narrative rely heavily on newspapers, due to a lack of other traditional primary sources. Huntington, like many other nineteenth-century cities, experienced many fires and was devastated by several major floods that probably resulted in the loss of potential sources for contemporary historians. Other sources that helped fill in the gaps consist of city charters, trade magazines and journals, Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, and some photographs lucky enough to have survived. The city of Huntington finds little to no place in existing urban and Appalachian historiography, but the actions of early residents who paid attention to national trends of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries help place the city in the larger context of American history regarding secondary sources. What follows is a

narrative that will help take the reader back to Huntington's early decades, and experience the rise of a peculiar city.



Huntington Crowd in 1873. Photograph courtesy of the West Virginia & Regional History Collection.

CHAPTER 1

CITY BUILDING, THE MEDIA, AND THE BIRTH OF HUNTINGTON

“We are going to build here, the commercial and manufacturing city of West Virginia. Human flesh, the devil, and the local periodicals of competing towns cannot change our plans.”

O.G. Chase, December 7, 1871⁶

Following the American Revolution inhabitants of the new United States headed west seeking fresh opportunities. As the country grew in population, advancements in agriculture helped feed the rising numbers of citizens, encouraging industrialization. Before long, small cities sprang up along rivers, utilizing their strategic locations and available resources; over time many developed into larger cities. From the 1830s to the Civil War, American cities grew rapidly. The Civil War halted urban growth, but as soon as the war ended, Americans picked up where they left off, again nurturing urban development. Following the Civil War, “land speculation was a major factor behind the location, and development of cities across the United States.”⁷

Founded in 1870 by railroad baron Collis P. Huntington, Huntington, West Virginia presents an intriguing study of nineteenth-century American city formation. Unlike most cities formed during that time, it is east of the Mississippi River. In 1869, after Huntington’s company finished the Central Pacific’s portion of the Transcontinental Railroad, he returned to New York City in hopes of gaining some much-needed rest, and to enjoy his accomplishments. Two young Virginia men, H. Chester Parsons and William C. Wickham, visited him to talk about the down-

⁶ O.G. Chase, “Three Times Three for Huntington,” *Huntington Independent*, December 7, 1871.

⁷ David Goldfield, *Encyclopedia of American Urban History*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2006), xxxvii.

and-out Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad, a remnant of Virginia's antebellum rail system. Steeped in lawsuits, excluded from the celebration at Promontory, and lacking significant capital, Huntington nonetheless devised a plan to buy the C&O; he needed to raise one million dollars to buy out Parsons and the other owners. Growing weary of his partners in the Central Pacific Railroad, Huntington recognized potential opportunities in purchasing the C&O Railroad:

The proposed Chesapeake and Ohio offered two tantalizing sites. One was a river port on the Ohio. From it, West Virginia coal and lumber could be dispatched to all parts of the Ohio and central Mississippi valleys. To it the same regions could send produce of all kinds for shipment to the Atlantic seaboard. The second site was a complement of the first—an ocean port which, having captured the export-import traffic of the Midwest, might rival the great harbors farther north.⁸

In November 1869, Collis Huntington completed the acquisition of the C&O Railroad. During that winter, Huntington and his associates ran numerous newspaper ads soliciting steel manufacturers, engineers, and mechanics while also advertising the sale of C&O stock. Handing over the sale of C&O stock to Fisk & Hatch, a New York banking firm, Huntington embarked on trips to survey potential locations for the C&O Western terminus. The frequency of newspaper ads significantly increased by February 1870, and newspapers ran editorials entailing “the importance of the C&O road.”⁹ The newly-reformed C&O Railroad immediately focused on the untapped natural resources and agriculture of West Virginia and Virginia.¹⁰ Huntington chose Richmond as the Eastern terminus, while early newspaper ads listed the mouth of the Big Sandy River as the Western terminus.¹¹ The choice of Richmond as the eastern terminus was an easy decision for Huntington and his partners, as the C&O originated in Virginia, but the western

⁸ David Lavender, *The Great Persuader: The Biography of Collis P. Huntington*, (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1969). 250. The second site that Collis Huntington had in mind for a harbor was Newport News, Virginia which the C & O Railroad reached in 1881.

⁹ “Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad Company,” *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, Thursday Morning, February 24, 1870.

¹⁰ *New York Herald*, New York, Thursday, February 17, 1870.

¹¹ The mouth of the Big Sandy River is located along the Ohio River in Catlettsburg, Kentucky.

terminus was another story. A possible explanation for choosing the Big Sandy location comes from 1866 plans chartered by the Covington & Ohio Railroad, a precursor of the Chesapeake & Ohio, which propagated a line from Covington, Virginia to the mouth of the Big Sandy River:

In the meantime, the state of Virginia had constituted its Board of Public Works, a corporation under the title of the *Covington and Ohio Railroad Company*, with authority to construct a line between Covington and the mouth of the Big Sandy tributary of the Ohio, with a branch to the mouth of the Kanawha, appropriating ten million for the work. The surveys were carried on and the work begun at several points along the line; and at the outbreak of war, which put an end to the appropriations.¹²

The mouth of the Big Sandy River lies roughly half-way between Pittsburgh and Cincinnati. Huntington, accompanied by Delos W. Emmons, General Wickham, General John Echols, and H. D. Whitcomb surveyed land through the Greenbrier Valley to the New River, and down to the Kanawha Valley, then to Kentucky.¹³ Huntington and his associates agreed the Big Sandy River could not accommodate large freight ships, so they decided against it because of unfavorable geography. Once Huntington finished surveying Kentucky, he headed back towards Guyandotte.¹⁴ The western terminus required a place suitable for docking facilities with several miles of naturally flat land, which the Big Sandy site lacked, but Guyandotte, a river town founded in 1809, had.

Legend has it that upon arriving in Guyandotte, Huntington was fined for leaving his horse untied outside of a saloon. Angered by the fine, Huntington immediately chose not to place

¹² *Central Trunk line to the West. A Statement Showing the Superiority of the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad, As a Short, Constant and Economical Line of Communication Between the Atlantic Seaboard Cities and Those of the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys and the Pacific Coast. With an Account of the Present Conditions and Properties of the Enterprise*, (Published for the Chesapeake & Ohio R.R. Co., by Fisk & Hatch Bankers, New York, New York, 1870). 8.

¹³ T. J. Burke, "The City of Huntington," *Herald-Dispatch*, December 24, 1895.

¹⁴ Burke, "The City of Huntington."

the western terminus for the C&O in Guyandotte.¹⁵ Instead, Huntington and his brother-in-law, Delos W. Emmons, brokered a deal with Peter Cline Buffington. “P.C.” to locals, Buffington owned a majority of the land known as Holderby’s Landing. The Buffington family had lived on the land, part of the Savage Land Grant along the Ohio River, since the early nineteenth century.¹⁶ One local history, *Cabell County Annals and Families* by George Seldon Wallace, states that Huntington purchased 5,000 acres for \$50,000.00.¹⁷ However, contemporary newspaper accounts state that Huntington paid P.C. Buffington \$1,000,000.00 dollars.¹⁸ It is more likely that Huntington paid \$50,000 for the land along the Ohio River considering the value and purchasing power of money from 1869 to 1870.¹⁹

Wallace’s *Cabell County Annals and Families*, published in 1935, is an important history of Huntington. Although his sources are not always provided, the book offers useful details about property ownership and transactions, and later works cite Wallace on important dates in Huntington’s history. Wallace’s work, however, does not address Huntington’s place in the larger histories of either the state or of urban development in the last decades of the nineteenth-century. The earliest history of the state of West Virginia, published in 1889, neglects the importance of urban centers in the state.²⁰ Histories of Huntington generally lack adequate

¹⁵ T. J. Burke, “The City of Huntington,” *Herald Dispatch*, December 24, 1895. Apparently when Huntington and his associates arrived in Guyandotte they tied their horses to posts to tour the town. One horse came untied and obstructed traffic, so the mayor fined Huntington five dollars. This happened in the early Spring of 1870.

¹⁶ The Savage Land Grant was commissioned by Virginia Governor Robert Dinwiddie and granted 27,000 acres of land to John Savage and 59 other soldiers for their service in the French-Indian War. Savage and most of the soldiers did not settle the land, and most of them sold their portions that later resulted in a legal dispute by some of the grantees’ heirs in 1814 that was resolved by 1819. See <http://www.marshall.edu/special-collections/savage/default.asp>

¹⁷ George Seldon Wallace, *Cabell County Annals and Families*, (Huntington: Garrett & Massie Publishers, 1935). 231.

¹⁸ “To Mechanics and Others,” O.G. Chase, *Huntington Independent*, September 21, 1871.

¹⁹ The purchasing power of one-hundred dollars in 1870 is equal to \$1,764.65 in 2016. If Collis Huntington purchased 5,000 acres at a price of \$50,000 in 1870 then that is the equivalent of \$882,325 in 2016. Estimates come from cpi-calculator at <https://www.minneapolisfed.org/community/financial-and-economic-education/cpi-calculator-information/consumer-price-index-1800>.

²⁰ Virgil A. Lewis, *History of West Virginia in Two Parts*, (Philadelphia: Hubbard Brothers Publishers, 1889).

documentation of sources. They tend to lean towards a chronology of the city, illustrated with pictures of buildings and early prominent citizens.²¹ Most importantly, existing histories of Huntington lack broader historical connections to Appalachian, urban, and American history. Just as West Virginia and Appalachian histories have neglected the city of Huntington, so too does the field of urban history. Historian Timothy R. Mahoney points out that urban historians typically focus on the development of large cities.²² As a result, small cities have largely been neglected in the field of urban history. This work aims in part to place Huntington in the larger context of American history as well as in urban and Appalachian histories.

THIS ROAD LEADS TO A NEW CITY

Urban historian Raymond A. Mohl notes: “Nineteenth-century American cities, especially those newly established in the raw and unsettled western regions, often owed their origins to individual entrepreneurs, promoters, and speculators.”²³ Though not in the American West, the new state of West Virginia also offered “raw and unsettled” areas. Before railroads entered the state, traveling short distances within state borders required indirect and arduous routes. Though the town of Guyandotte was settled in 1809 and had a population of roughly 1,000 people by 1870, the lands west of the town were barely settled.²⁴ The new state of West Virginia received its first new city at the hands of a railroad man.²⁵

²¹ See Don Daniel McMillian, *Huntington*, (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2003). See also James E. Casto, *Legendary Locals of Huntington*, (Charleston: Legendary Locals an imprint of Arcadia Publishing, 2013).

²² Timothy R. Mahoney, “The Small City in American History,” *Indiana Magazine of History*. December 2003, Vol. 99 Issue 4, p 311-330. Pp. 311.

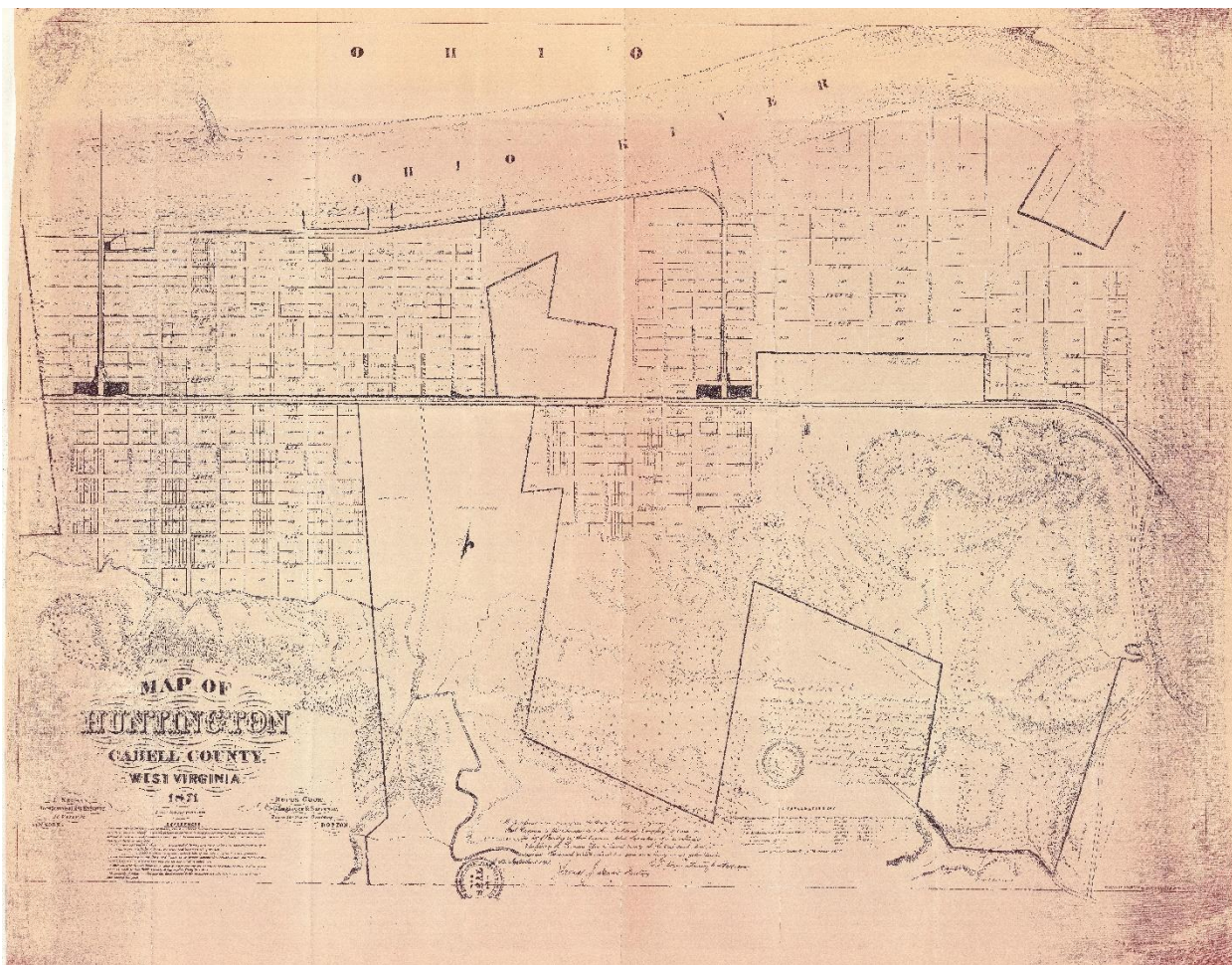
²³ Raymond A. Mohl, *The New City: Urban America in the Industrial Age, 1860-1920*, (Arlington Heights: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1985). 68.

²⁴ Richard L Forstall, *Population of States and Counties of the United States, 1790-1990*. (Washington, D.C.: Department of Commerce, U.S. Bureau of the Census Population Division, 1996, Part II), 179.

²⁵ John Alexander Williams, *West Virginia: A History*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984), 110. After West Virginia became a state in 1863, no new cities formed until Huntington was incorporated in 1871. Towns and cities either existed prior to West Virginia statehood, or developed later because of late nineteenth-century natural resource extraction developments, and railroads.

Collis P. Huntington and Delos W. Emmons formed the Central Land Company, and immediately began the construction of a train station, houses for C&O employees, shops for commerce, and saloons. Quickly after that, the constable was ordered to erect a police station as a secure place for prisoners.²⁶ While the construction of the first buildings took place, Huntington hired Rufus Cook, a civil engineer from Boston, to design the city. Cook utilized a grid plan common to nineteenth-century American urban planning, a layout suitable for a commercial city. The early population consisted mainly of railroad workers and businesspeople from the North.

²⁶ Charles Bias, "The Completion of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad to the Ohio River, 1869,1873," *West Virginia History* 40 (Summer 1979), pp. 395-96.



1871 Rufus Cook Map of Huntington. Provided by Marshall University Special Collections & Archives.

The *Wheeling Intelligencer* provides one of the earliest descriptions of the project: “The Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad have purchased a large tract of land on the riverside, at the point of intersection of the Guyandotte River with the Ohio, and extending four miles. Upon this they will lay out a town, to be named Huntington, after the President of the road.”²⁷ The article goes on to discuss the importance of the C&O’s upcoming construction of a bridge to Ohio and the

²⁷ “Founding A City at Guyandotte,” *Wheeling Intelligencer*, July 18, 1870.

intention to make Huntington the chief city of the upper Ohio Valley. The article suggests the capitalists involved with Huntington were “calculating upon advantages which are not possessed by any other locality,”²⁸ while not revealing any details of Huntington’s plans.

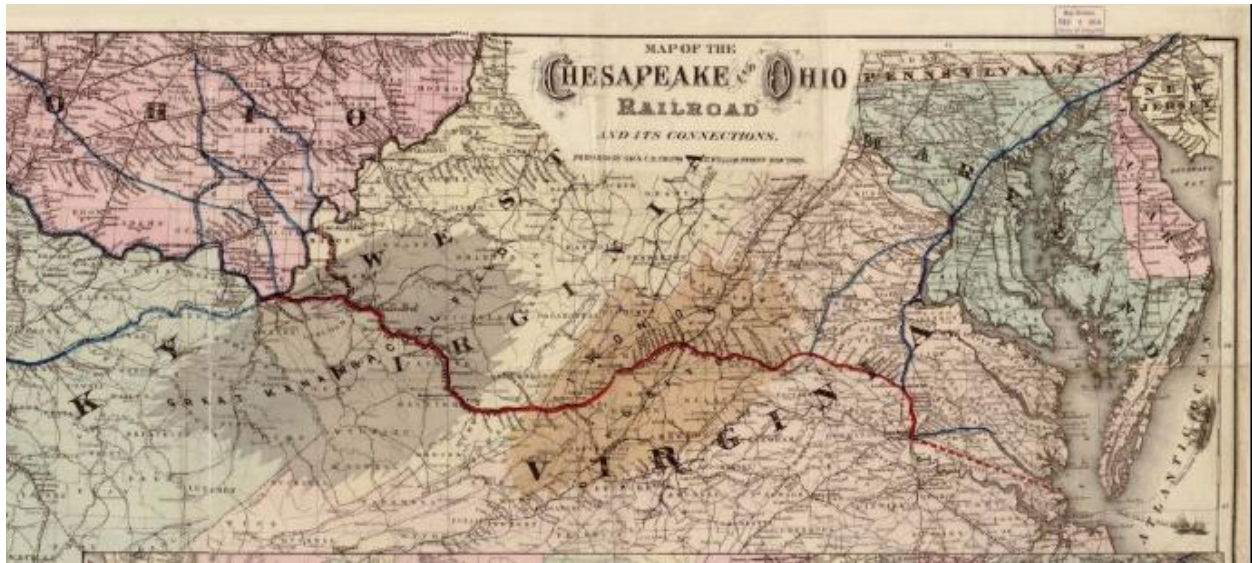
Four months later the same newspaper published another brief article describing the city of Huntington: “For two or three miles square at the western terminus of the C. & O. R. R. just below Guyandotte, the land is laid off into streets, parks, and lots, ready for operations early in the spring.”²⁹ The description of the city’s layout reflects Cook’s gridiron design. Streets, avenues, and lots, with the inclusion of parks, indicate the creation of a new and modern city, more orderly and regular than older, northern and eastern cities. From March of 1870 into the winter, the C&O constructed the necessary facilities to begin extending the railroad eastward to the Kanawha Valley. Meanwhile, the C&O also completed a line started before Huntington purchased the C&O from Richmond of 227 miles westward to White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia.³⁰

The C&O route thus went east to the Kanawha Valley, then south, connecting with White Sulphur Springs, and thence proceeding east through Virginia to the Atlantic Ocean. Across the Ohio River, Huntington also began construction of the Symmes Creek line that connected to Dayton and Cincinnati extending to Chicago. This network of rail lines from Virginia through southern West Virginia, and to the Midwest made the future city of Huntington central to exploiting previously untapped natural resources and agricultural prospects, priming the city for commercial prominence. The rail through West Virginia and Virginia’s rich natural resources,

²⁸ “Founding A City at Guyandotte,” *Wheeling Intelligencer*, July 18, 1870.

²⁹ “The Coming City of the Southwest,” *Wheeling Intelligencer*, November 28, 1870.

³⁰ “An Important Railroad Line,” *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, February 23, 1870.



Map of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad and its Connections in 1873. Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.³¹

connected Huntington to markets such as Cincinnati, Louisville, the Mississippi Valley, and Chicago.³²

Construction of buildings in Huntington halted in the winter of 1870 but commenced again in the following spring of 1871. O.G. Chase, the proprietor and editor of Huntington's first newspaper, the *Huntington Independent*, noted that "Hundreds of town lots have been sold, and the nucleus for a great city has been planted at what was formerly Maple Grove."³³ C&O workers continued to erect buildings on the vacant lots mapped out by Rufus Cook. At the same time construction of rail line continued. Supplies for rail lines came from Richmond, "shipped to Parkersburg, via the Orange and Alexandria railroad, and Baltimore and Ohio railroad, then

³¹ For a higher resolution visit <https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3706p.rr003660/>

³² "C. & O. R. R.," *Highland Weekly News*, November 02, 1871.

³³ O.G. Chase, "The Independent," *Huntington Independent*, August 31, 1871. The name Maple Grove was originally the name of the land that Marshall College (now Marshall University) was built on in 1837. See J.P. Hale, "Marshall Academy," *West Virginia Historical Magazine Quarterly*, Volume I, (Charleston: West Virginia Historical and Antiquarian Society, 1901), 38.

transported to Huntington by water.”³⁴ During the summer of 1871, the pace of building rapidly increased, spurring greater outside interests and migration. One of the earliest descriptions of the city, from Ohio’s *Highland Weekly News*, noted “Hundreds of men are at work grading the streets and wharfs. A large number were laying track, switches, &c., for the C. & O. R.R. About 300 men were at work on the roundhouse, and everything indicated vigor and enterprise.”³⁵

The earliest buildings in town represent a bridge between older and new city styles and planning. One of Collis Huntington’s goals in creating the city of Huntington was to create a modern city. However, the September 1871 *Highland News* article noted an interesting feature of early Huntington: “About forty or fifty houses, mostly for mercantile purposes, are already up and being finished.”³⁶ Urban historians often comment on residential and mercantile housing as a remnant of colonial urbanization. During the Colonial and Early National period, people often lived and worked out of their homes, usually erecting them near water systems or mills.³⁷ As the *Highland News* article points out, the “forty or fifty” mercantile houses constructed were near the Ohio River. If mercantile housing was a remnant of older urban habits, these houses still provided dual functions. The aesthetic quality of Victorian homes in the heart of downtown provided a sense of strong industry and savvy business people, while their proximity to the river also offered easy access to the wharf located between 9th and 10th Streets along Second Avenue.³⁸

³⁴ “The Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad,” *Daily Dispatch*, Richmond, Virginia, June 09, 1871.

³⁵ “The New Town of Huntington, W. VA.,” *Highland News*, Hillsborough, Ohio, September 21, 1871.

³⁶ “New Town of Huntington.”

³⁷ See Louisa Iarocci, *The Urban Department Store in America, 1850-1930*, (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2014), pp.13-14.

³⁸ See Rufus Cook 1871 map.

The construction of houses, hotels, grading of streets, and continued work on track lines provided materials for O.G. Chase to promote the city of Huntington via the *Huntington Independent*. Chase often cited in his editorials the high subscription rate of his newspaper, and in turn, utilized the geographic circulation of the *Independent* to endorse the new city. In a September editorial Chase wrote: “We are still receiving letters from various sections of the country, making an inquiry about the prospects and prices in Huntington. Many people do not know that 5,000 lots are for sale here, and that hundreds are already sold at prices ranging from \$450 to \$750 for lots 30 by 140.”³⁹ As Chase continued to promote the young city, he stated that “many lots have been sold and large Hotels and business houses are springing up like magic.”⁴⁰ Additionally, “a fine three story brick college building with a capacity for 500 students stands in the center of the town.”⁴¹ Echoing Huntington’s ads for C&O jobs, Chase advertised potential employment for mechanics in Huntington with pay ranging from “\$2 to \$4 a day,” quite a considerable amount for the period.⁴²

While the construction of fine homes and mercantile houses proceeded, other forms of housing such as houseboats and boardinghouses also filled a need for new residents. The wharf on the Ohio River provided the city with access to riverboats, but also offered people a place to live:

The large number of family boats at our landing has become a topic of general remark, and upon a thorough investigation we find an average of about fifteen family boats permanently fixed at our wharf. These boats contain about twenty or twenty-five families, many of them keep quite a number of boarders, so that each family will average about ten persons, constituting a floating population from 200 to 300 persons who have no other than, “a home on the wave.”⁴³

³⁹ “To Mechanics and Others,” O.G. Chase, *Huntington Independent*, September 21, 1871.

⁴⁰ “To Mechanics and Others.”

⁴¹ “To Mechanics and Others.”

⁴² “To Mechanics and Others.”

⁴³ O.G. Chase, “River Life,” *Huntington Independent*, May 16, 1872.

Despite the availability of lots for sale in the city and active commerce, the river attracted people who took advantage of the rapid economic growth and need for housing by renting to boarders.

Boarding houses have long played a prominent role in cities providing transient people with a place to live, often fairly cheaply. Historian Wendy Gamber emphasizes the distinct importance of boardinghouses in nineteenth-century America:

What historians call the market revolution, a series of related developments that included the expansion of commercial agriculture, the beginnings of industrialization, the emergence of a working class dependent on wages, the rise of a salaried white-collar middle class, and massive urban growth, could never have been accomplished without boardinghouses and the labor of those who kept them.⁴⁴

The city of Huntington significantly benefitted from boarding houses. Nineteenth-century America viewed boardinghouses as potential sources for vice and violence, standing in stark contrast to the Ideal Victorian image of what home represented. The young city of Huntington's housing needs included varying types of boardinghouses, whether on land or water, tenement housing, and operations where the distinction between hotel and boardinghouse blurred.⁴⁵

Boardinghouses and tenements provided workers, flooding into Huntington, with a place to live. As the population reached roughly 2,000 residents by 1872, boardinghouses and tenements sprang up on Second Street and Third Avenue, at the heart of early downtown Huntington.⁴⁶ Owners and operators of boardinghouses and tenements comprised an interesting mix. Three of the four tenement houses in the city were owned by prominent locals. W.P. Holderby and the Mayor, P.C. Buffington, while the other two were owned by Captain Trice, and

⁴⁴ Wendy Gamber, *The Boardinghouse in Nineteenth-Century America*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 3.

⁴⁵ One example of ambiguous descriptions of boardinghouses and hotels was when the Breslin House opened. Located on Third Avenue & Eighth Street, the *Huntington Independent* advertised the house in a manner that did not distinguish whether it was an upscale boardinghouse or a hotel. Then the Breslin House was listed as a hotel in December 1872, see O.G. Chase, "Huntington Business Directory," *Huntington Independent*, December 12, 1872.

⁴⁶ O.G. Chase, *Huntington Independent*, January 01, 1872.

W.S. Downer, a former Confederate Staff Officer to Robert E. Lee.⁴⁷ Buffington's tenement house was located on 8th Avenue, in an area largely undeveloped, and predominantly farmland.⁴⁸ The boardinghouses were owned by other residents including a woman, Mary McVay.⁴⁹ It is hard to determine how many boardinghouses existed by 1872 in Huntington because only some of them advertised in the *Huntington Independent*, and no city directories or other sources exist that might inform on this issue.

The *Huntington Independent* noted that all the "Boardinghouses are full at \$2 to \$5 per week."⁵⁰ The Chesapeake House and the Breslin House, both located on Third Avenue, were typical establishments. When the Breslin House opened the week of May 5th, 1872, noting the aesthetic quality of the house, the *Independent* continued:

This large and well located building adds another monument to mark the success of thrifty enterprise in our new town. Six months ago, J.J. Mechling and W.T. Prickett, occupied a small boarding house at a big rent [sic], but by energy and marked attention, the house was sustained and constantly filled with a most respectable class of boarders, where they propose entertaining the stranger in the most approved style and at the reduced rate of only \$1.50 per day. We bespeak for the new house a share of the public patronage.⁵¹

The Breslin House rates clearly reflect a higher quality boardinghouse at more than double the cost per week of the other boardinghouses in the city. With a range of boardinghouses in the city that varied in price, Huntington could accommodate migrant workers or affluent businesspeople.

⁴⁷ O. G. Chase, "First Winter In Huntington," *Huntington Independent*, February 08, 1872. This article provides a directory of business owners where Holderby, Buffington, Trice, and Downer were listed as owning and operating boardinghouses. According to this directory, five residents operated boardinghouses by 1872, although Chase makes multiple references to other boardinghouses indicating that more than five were in operation.

⁴⁸ See Rufus Cook Map.

⁴⁹ *1880 West Virginia Federal Census Schedules, Brooke, Cabell, Calhoun, Clay, and Doddridge Counties*. (College Park: Bureau of the Census, 1970). 132.

⁵⁰ O.G. Chase, "Our Enterprise," *Huntington Independent*, February 8, 1872.

⁵¹ O.G. Chase, "The Breslin House," *Huntington Independent*, May 16, 1872.



Mary McVay's Boardinghouse, 1880. Located at 1215 Third Avenue. Photo courtesy of David Smith, from his personal collection.

As work continued in the city, journalists from other cities visited Huntington often, writing articles focusing on the development of the new city and the progress of the C&O railroad. An October 1871 *Richmond Dispatch* reprinted an article from the *New York Tribune* about a New Yorker's visit to Huntington. The visitor briefly describes the city, the amount of land purchased to build the city, and the machine shops being erected for the C&O. The journalist noted: "On this plateau the company have laid out fine, broad streets and avenues, which they are about to pave with the coarse gravel or shingle which lines the river bank and

makes an excellent road-bed, as I saw on the other side. They have already five miles of streets graded, most of which [are] eighty feet wide.”⁵²

The width of streets and avenues in the city provides a distinct difference between old eastern cities and their piecemeal patchwork growth. Historian Jon A. Peterson noted the benefits of nineteenth-century designs: “Once established, a grid city became highly legible especially when town fathers indulged the national penchant for naming streets using numbers, thereby making urban space a public index of itself, as accessible to any newcomer as to a resident. A visitor knew a place before he got there, so to speak.”⁵³ The grid design utilized for Huntington marked it as a modern city. As the city expanded, so did news about Huntington. Articles about the city appeared in many newspapers, with varying reports of progress about residents, migrant and native, along with some of the first stereotypes of West Virginians, and reflecting rising animosity towards Huntington from older cities within the state.

WHAT’S GOING ON WITH HUNTINGTON?

Following the Civil War, immigrants flocked to the United States for economic opportunities, flooding major industrial cities of the Northeast and Midwest. Native white Americans became increasingly untrusting of immigrants, creating many social and cultural tensions. The *Huntington Independent*’s September 1871 editorial offered them a promising prospect:

Emigrants need not come here to look, but if they desire to settle in flourishing country, where a City will spring up like a mushroom; where they can realize all the benefits of a western prairie in the speedy growth and certain advancement of real estate in a great

⁵² “Our Great Railroad: A New Yorker Travels—He Sees Huntington and Various Other Places—Prospects &C. Correspondence of the *New York Tribune*,” *Richmond Dispatch*, Monday October 16, 1871.

⁵³ Jon A. Peterson, *The Birth of City Planning in the United States, 1840-1917*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 10.

City, and at the same time the benefit of civilization, variety of fruits and facilities for an education surrounding them, then here is the place. *Come to Huntington*.⁵⁴

The paper listed available jobs and their respective earnings, the costs to buy lots, and the prices of building materials in the city. Touting gainful employment and the possibility of purchasing a lot with only a ten percent down payment, he emphasized that: “Newcomers should be possessed with either muscle, brains, or money and we guarantee success.”⁵⁵

During the post-Civil War era, the tensions of Reconstruction ran high. To allay concern, Chase explicitly discussed these issues, seeking to minimize sectional conflict. He frequently wrote editorials advocating a fresh start, a place where people can become successful, “as long as they leave their sectional differences from their places of departure.”⁵⁶ Chase used the *Independent* as a strong voice calling out to immigrants, denouncing sectional conflict, and promoting commerce to enhance the allure of Huntington. Other newspapers, however, conveyed mixed feelings towards the young city.

For example, the young city of Huntington was about to receive attention from a much larger city’s paper. In October 1871, former editor of the *New York Post*, author and current writer for the *New York Tribune* Charles Nordhoff visited Huntington, reporting on the C&O railroad and the city’s progress.⁵⁷ Nordhoff began his multi-piece article by describing the Ohio bottomlands across from Huntington. Recounting Ohioans and their farms, he noted: “They are very poor farmers indeed. The land is rich, the bottoms broad, and the corn tall and heavy, but

⁵⁴ O.G. Chase, “To Emigrants,” *Huntington Independent*, September 27, 1871.

⁵⁵ “To Emigrants.”

⁵⁶ O.G. Chase, “To The Public,” *The Huntington Independent*, September 20, 1871, 3.

⁵⁷ For information on Charles Nordhoff see; Charles Nordhoff, “Autobiography and Reminiscence of Charles Nordhoff, (Deceased), 1901,” Institutional Records Digitization Project: Reminiscences of Early Pioneers: 1900-1904, <http://content.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/kt7d5nc99c/?order=3&brand=calisphere>.

the houses are small and mean, the dooryards filthy, the barns dilapidated, and altogether it is as unpleasing and unthrifty a region as I have seen in many a day.”⁵⁸

A subtle, but clear distinction between native West Virginians and migrant residents underscored the travel account. Nordhoff points out the dialect of locals in their pronunciation of the county’s name, noting: “Cabell, by the way, is hereabouts called Cable.”⁵⁹ A solid description of the city and the work carried out by C&O employees in Huntington set the tone of the article. He described the street paving, an impressive railroad shop, and a locomotive house, but points out that “houses are still too few.” Overall, Nordhoff is impressed with the works in Huntington thus far, noting: “I confess I had no idea, until I saw these large works, how great are the necessities of one of our great trunk lines of railroad for the material—the rolling stock—alone, of their businesses.”⁶⁰

Despite Nordhoff’s positive opinions of Huntington, he is less impressed by West Virginians. After touring Huntington, Nordhoff left for Coalsmouth (St. Albans, W.V.) to inspect the construction of C&O lines, and the railroad workers building the tracks to the Kanawha Valley.⁶¹ As Cicero Fain points out, Nordhoff sheds a positive light on white and black labor dynamics, especially the opinion of black men working on the C&O lines.⁶² A majority of white workers came from Ohio and other northern states and most of the freedmen from Virginia and Kentucky. When describing the work carried out in Huntington, Nordhoff stated that most of the blacksmiths and laborers came from Ohio. “The West Virginian is, so far as I have been able to

⁵⁸ “A Horseback Journey Through the Wilderness—I,” Charles Nordhoff, *New York Tribune*, October 10, 1871.

⁵⁹ “A Horseback Journey”

⁶⁰ “A Horseback Journey”

⁶¹ *Prospects of the Coal River Railroad Company of West Virginia*, (Cincinnati: A. H. Pounsford & CO., 1879), 5. Coalsmouth is modern day St. Albans, West Virginia that is about 12 miles south of Charleston. The area was rich in cannel, splint, and bituminous coal.

⁶² Cicero M. Fain, III, “Race, River, and the Railroad: Black Huntington, West Virginia, 1871-1929,” PhD diss., (Ohio University, 2009). 109-112.

see thus far on my journey—unless he be black—a cumberer of the earth.”⁶³ Nordhoff reiterated the claims of migrant C & O foremen that native West Virginians were in the way of progress. The locals were viewed as a hindrance.

Referring to the rich soil and valuable lumber between Huntington and Coalsmouth, Nordhoff states:

this will now in a few weeks have railroad connection with Ohio; and in course of time probably a new population will come in here and take possession. This at least we may hope, for the West Virginian, as a rule, seems to be a tolerably useless creature. One would think that the inhabitants hereabout would have found their advantages in furnishing supplies to the railroad company, but I believe whiskey is the only commodity they have sold.⁶⁴

Nordhoff reinforces the negative opinion of native West Virginians by quoting a railroad contractor. The contractor noted:

natives are totally useless as workmen on the line; and of over 2,000,000 of ties used for the road between Huntington and New River, not a single tie was supplied by a West Virginian. Wherever I inquired, whether on the track, in sawmills, or any other department of industry, I received the answer that the white natives were useless. The ax-men, sawmill-men, the laborers—skilled and unskilled—are all brought from Ohio, Pennsylvania, or Eastern Virginia. An Eastern man summed up for me his opinion of the people, when he said: They think the Lord put them here, and that He is bound to take care of them; and they won’t interfere.⁶⁵

Nordhoff’s opinion of Huntington is positive, overall. He is surprised with the number of buildings and industry already in production after only a year-and-a-half of the city’s existence and believes the city will continue to grow rapidly, soon becoming a significant place of

⁶³ “A Horseback Journey Through the Wilderness—I.” Nordhoff. According to the *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, cumberer is defined as: “1 archaic: trouble harass; 2a: to hinder or encumber by being in the way; to clutter up (rocks~ing the yard).” *Merriam-Webster Dictionary’s Collegiate Dictionary*, Eleventh Edition, (Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, 2003), 304-305.

⁶⁴ “A Horseback Journey.”

⁶⁵ “A Horseback Journey.”

industry. His reporting of African American workers casts a positive light on race and labor dynamics during Reconstruction. Citing native West Virginians as useless or being in the way of industrial progress prompted heated responses from West Virginia newspapers. However, the *Huntington Independent* along with other newspapers looked to the C&O railroad as a means to entice outside populations to come in and uplift the young state of West Virginia. For better or worse, Nordhoff's article boosted the city of Huntington and insulted the people of West Virginia at the same time.⁶⁶

The *Huntington Independent* reprinted Nordhoff's travel account without the parts wherein native West Virginians were insulted. Chase admitted he was omitting certain defamations of native West Virginians: "Here follows some very severe strictures upon West Virginians, in general, which we omit, as they are entirely undeserved by a large majority of our citizens, and only apply to a small class with which every community is cursed to a greater or less extent."⁶⁷ Towards the end of the article, Chase defends another omission, noting:

Here again we are compelled to omit some very injurious reflections upon the lack of enterprise displayed by West Virginians in general, but as he admits having received his information from other sources than actual observation, we feel satisfied that he erred from ignorance.⁶⁸

At the same time, though, Chase omitted Nordhoff's positive opinions and observations of freedmen working for the C&O railroad.

The "Horseback Journey Through the Wilderness," article, while it prompted heated responses from the *Huntington Independent*, also generated slightly indifferent responses from

⁶⁶ For more on the origins of stereotypes of West Virginians and other Appalachian regions, see: Henry D. Shapiro, *Appalachia On Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870-1920*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1978).

⁶⁷ "A Horseback Journey," reprinted in the *Huntington Independent* with comments by O.G. Chase, November 09, 1871.

⁶⁸ "A Horseback Journey"

other state papers. The *Wheeling Intelligencer* reported on Nordhoff's negative remarks about native West Virginians, noting: "In a letter descriptive of people and places about Huntington, he paints the average native as he finds them there in anything but glowing colors."⁶⁹ The remainder of the article cites Nordhoff's slanderous comments of native West Virginians without offering a rebuttal like Chase of the *Huntington Independent* did. It is possible that the *Intelligencer* article wanted to highlight Nordhoff's negative remarks as it mainly described "southern" West Virginians as being useless.

Perhaps Wheeling's promoters feared the potential competition a growing Huntington represented. Other state newspapers began criticizing the young city along with the C&O railroad. In December 1871, the *Huntington Independent* published a lengthy editorial discussing the rising tensions between Charleston and Huntington, citing an editorial in a Charleston newspaper. According to O.G. Chase, the *Charleston News* listed the towns and cities in West Virginia considered progressive, and growing with prominence. The city of Huntington was not on that list. Though Chase believed Huntington's exclusion from the list an unintentional accident, acrimony underlay his editorial, noting, perhaps with subtle sarcasm:

In the estimation of the *News*, it would seem, the *City of Huntington* was not deemed to be of sufficient importance to have a place in its liberal enumeration. It belongs, it would appear, to the unknown class of "many other towns," &c., and is studiously omitted from the list of advancing places in every section of our State except in this unfortunate locality.⁷⁰

A town rivalry based on Huntington's position as the C&O's western terminus is clearly evident here. Charleston, Chase alludes, is upset that the C&O did not choose the capital city as the

⁶⁹ "What a New Yorker Thinks of the Representative West Virginian," *Wheeling Intelligencer*, Wheeling, W.VA. October 18, 1871.

⁷⁰ O.G. Chase, "The Cities of Huntington and Charleston," *Huntington Independent*, December 11, 1871.

western terminus, even though geography favored Huntington. Chase continued reporting the degree of ill will projected at Huntington, noting:

It is but candid to say that our city has encountered a degree of enmity, and a measure of depreciation from the same citizens of Charleston, that has not been indulged in by any other community in our State—The causes of this exhibition of ill feeling, are of course, well understood. We have not alluded to these unbecoming sneers heretofore, because it is the settled determination of our citizens to engage in no unfriendly controversy with those of any other city, whether a fancied “rival” or otherwise; but we take this opportunity to reflect the general feeling here upon this subject, which briefly, is, that whether the citizens of Charleston propose to devote themselves to a lifetime of enmity, envy and grumbling, because it is proposed to build up a large and flourishing city *right here*—one that must, of necessity, overshadow them as well as other adjacent places—is a matter of indifference to all parties in this section of West Virginia.⁷¹

Chase continues reporting on the *Charleston News* editorial’s disdain for the city of Huntington, referring to how people in Charleston are tired of hearing about the vast cornfields and pastures in Huntington. Additionally, the *Charleston News* denigrated the C&O railroad and its employees.⁷² The *Huntington Independent* reiterated that there is nothing to gain from engaging in a rivalry with the capital city and that all cities and towns in West Virginia should work together for the improvement of the state. No matter the sentiment, Huntington continued experiencing hostility from other cities in West Virginia in subsequent years.

As the city of Huntington formed, grew, and gained population within the first year, the allure of the new city brought people from the north, south, and parts of the Midwest. More importantly, the people involved with setting up the city, mainly Collis P. Huntington, Delos W. Emmons, and other C&O employees brought with them a degree of Eastern business methods, education models, and promoted bipartisan politics. Though West Virginia was a product of the Civil War, it did not experience the devastation many other areas did during the war. The state’s

⁷¹ “The Cities of Huntington and Charleston,”

⁷² “The Cities of Huntington and Charleston”

economic deficits would be addressed as the C & O Railroad offered the state the potential of economic uplift. With the C & O Railroad's intentions to profit from West Virginia's natural resources, it needed a strong city and Huntington served as its terminus, but it needed to grow physically and in population for the C & O to fully benefit.

In September 1875, the *National Republican*, a Washington D.C. newspaper visited Huntington because of the continued growth in the city:

As a proof of what can be done by indomitable energy properly directed, Huntington deserves more than a passing notice. For a three-year old city, Huntington is certainly a marvel of energy and enterprise. It was first a city on paper, then a city of substance and reality. The projectors, it must be said to their credit, faithfully carried out the plan as it appeared on paper, and what is more, kept all their promises.⁷³

The article provides a glimpse of what the social and economic life was like prior to Maple Grove becoming Huntington:

Before the opening of this great thoroughfare there was a small landing for steamboats here, called Maple Grove landing. Then a grocery, a lawyer's shanty and a blacksmith's shop constituted all there was of a town at Maple Grove landing. The lawyer, in order to make ends meet, had to tend bar for the man who kept the grocery whenever there was a rush of custom. Now, Huntington boasts of three thousand or thereabouts of as thrifty inhabitants as can be found anywhere.⁷⁴

As a planned city, Huntington virtually did not exist in the winter of 1869-70, had a small population, and an economy that was dependent on riverboat traffic.

The *National Republican* focused on the gridiron plan that formed the city of Huntington and noted an important feature: "As soon as the road was opened, the company began a grand comprehensive scheme of improvements. Wide streets and avenues were opened and graded, but

⁷³ "West Virginia's Progress: History of Huntington City," *National Republican*, October 26, 1875.

⁷⁴ "West Virginia's Progress." Note on the *National Republican's* reference to Huntington's name prior to the city's founding as Maple Grove, which other local histories make references to Maple Grove and Holderbys Landing as names used before Huntington became an incorporated city. Although, it should be noted, the United States Postal Service recognized this geographic area as Maple Grove, Cabell County, West Virginia as late as 1870. See Cerinda W. Evans, *Collis Potter Huntington*, Volume II, (Warwick: Publication of Mariners Museum, 1952), 56.

the paving contractor has not yet made his appearance.”⁷⁵ The article went on to discuss the growing economy, schools, and the role of the Central Land Company as the “great controlling power here [Huntington].”⁷⁶ Undoubtedly, in less than five years, Huntington established itself as a commercial city looking to continue its upward trends.

CONCLUSION

Newspaper coverage of Huntington during its earliest years was largely positive. Even Nordhoff’s article was kind towards Huntington as a city, if not so kind about native West Virginians. The media attention Huntington received led to rising animosity towards the city from older urban areas in West Virginia. Collis Huntington recognized the potential from Nordhoff’s article about Huntington in 1871 that illustrated the need for an outside population to enter West Virginia, and to some degree, tame the frontier elements of his new city east of the Mississippi. Dealing with similar problems in California, Huntington hired Nordhoff in the following year to present the allure of California to eastern audiences through articles in *Harper’s Magazine*.⁷⁷ The city sought to attract northerners to Huntington to further boost the city, economy, and the C&O railroad’s investment in West Virginia.

As for the rising tensions between Charleston and Huntington, historian Raymond Mohl discusses the important connection between railroads and new cities: “The role of railroads cannot be separated from the urban boosterism of the late 19th century. Indeed, the coming of a

⁷⁵ “West Virginia’s Progress.”

⁷⁶ “West Virginia’s Progress.”

⁷⁷ For more information on Nordhoff’s role as a booster for new cities see Richard J. Orsi, *Sunset Limited: The Southern Pacific Railroad and the Development of the American West, 1850-1930*, (Oakland: University of California Press, 2005). 133-4. See also, Stephen J. Mexal, *Reading for Liberalism: The Overland Monthly and the Writing of the Modern American West*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013). 241. “California. How To Get There, And What To See By The Way,” Charles Nordhoff, *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, Vol. XLIV, No. 264, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1872). Pp 865-881.

rail line could make a town spectacularly successful.”⁷⁸ Mohl also considered what happened when railroads decided to detour a town or city, noting: “towns bypassed by railroads were often doomed to certain failure, or at least slow growth. Thus, townsite speculation really became dependent on railroad development.”⁷⁹ The location of Huntington on the Ohio River provided the necessary river port for easy shipping and flat land that facilitated rapid construction of railroad shops. Where geography benefitted Huntington, it disadvantaged Charleston. The C&O railroad continued beyond the capital city, adhering to its goal of penetrating the southern counties and connecting them to Midwest and Eastern markets.

Popular historical memory usually regards nineteenth-century urban growth as a Midwestern and Western phenomenon, with Western frontier cities as illustrations. Raymond Mohl points out, though, that: “Not all of the great urban promotions occurred in the West. By the late 19th century, a new frontier was opening up in Florida with railroads a major factor. As in the West, town and city promotion accompanied and sometimes even preceded agricultural development.”⁸⁰ Henry M. Flagler was responsible for building extravagant hotels in St. Augustine, buying the Florida East Coast Railroad connecting Daytona to West Palm Beach, and then also with the small town of Miami by 1896. Well before Flagler, Collis Huntington envisioned and built a western terminus city for the C & O Railroad. Huntington represents another example of a non-Western late nineteenth-century frontier city, neglected as such until now.

⁷⁸ Mohl, *The New City: Urban America in the Industrial Age, 1*, (Arlington Heights: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1985). 71.

⁷⁹ Mohl, *The New City*, 71.

⁸⁰ Mohl, *The New City*, 72.

One of the major ingredients in Collis Huntington's plans was to profit from shipping natural resources and agricultural goods out of West Virginia. Huntington opened up West Virginia to natural resource extractions, generating a boom that industrialists, capitalists, and laborers flocked to. The city of Huntington, as the western terminus for the C&O railroad, provided a catalyst for notable change in subsequent years in West Virginia. Ultimately, though, the city of Huntington required a network of rail lines through lands rich in natural resources to grow, along with a migrant population. Huntington grew into a medium-sized city, never becoming the large metropolis that town boosters envisioned. What it did become was one of the most important coal centers of the Ohio Valley, and thus significantly contributed to the growth of America heading into the twentieth century. The next chapter explores the social and cultural fabric formed by a community of relative strangers, creating the city's lasting identity.

CHAPTER 2

A COMMUNITY OF RELATIVE STRANGERS

“A Great City called Huntington, is springing up as a monument here, to mark the burnt ruins of the sad failure of the first half of the present century. Sojourners in a strange land will avail themselves of this opportunity to get reliable information of the business and progress of this new enterprise.”⁸¹

O.G. Chase, April 08, 1871.

As a community of relative strangers converged in an unknown place, migrant residents in the new city of Huntington came together and set in motion the social, and cultural fabric within the fledgling urbanity. Because the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad served as a force of attraction that offered economic opportunities, an intersectional migration occurred. Northerners comprised the bulk of early residents, along with African-Americans from Virginia, and poor white laborers from the Old South congregated as city boosters promoted commerce over sectionalism. The first residents of Huntington quickly realized the need to form benevolent and charitable groups, as well as public schools, while building a city to accommodate more new migrants. This chapter explores the early efforts of Huntingtonians to promote a bipartisan political atmosphere, form charitable groups, adjust to diversity, and build the city’s first schools.

SEEKING MIDDLE GROUND IN THE MID-ATLANTIC

Following the Civil War, Americans became increasingly mobile as many migrants headed West, though some migrated to the Mid-Atlantic and the Ohio Valley. Chaim M. Rosenberg, noting Yankee use of railroads to move the west, argued that: “the railroads dramatically eased the movement of people, equipment, farm products and minerals. Yankees

⁸¹ “The Independent,” O.G. Chase, *Guyandotte Independent*, April 08, 1871.

and Yankee capital played a major role in building the nation's railroads, especially in the booming West."⁸² Similarly, Collis P. Huntington provided an incentive for people on the move to consider West Virginia as a place to go, specifically, Huntington, West Virginia. Huntington employed a culturally and politically diverse group of men, including William C. Wickham, a former Confederate general, and H. Chester Parsons, a Captain in the Union Army. Also on board with Huntington was John Hunt Oley, another former Union general, and Major H.D. Whitcomb, along with Delos W. Emmons, a New York Democrat.⁸³

Huntington and his associates worked with a local lawyer, Albert Laidley, who arranged legal transactions for the sale of land from several local farmers. Delos W. Emmons purchased much of the land from Peter Cline Buffington, a former Confederate soldier, thus beginning the migrant-native bilateral relationship. The initial group of men who came to Huntington at the height of the Reconstruction Era to develop a commercial city based on the C&O railroad western terminus established a bipartisan atmosphere that in turn set a social, cultural, and political precedent lasting roughly to the mid-1890s. To promote commerce above sectionalism, a bipartisan polity was essential because of the political corruption evident in the North and South during Reconstruction.⁸⁴ Further promoting social, cultural, and economic viability through bipartisanship were the inaugural elections for city government in December 1871, soon after Huntington was incorporated.

The first election had few voters due to West Virginia requiring citizens to have residency in the state for one year and city residence for six months. The *Huntington*

⁸² Chaim M. Rosenberg, *Yankee Colonies across America: Cities Upon the Hills*, (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015). 221.

⁸³ Wallace, *Cabell County Annals and Families*, 224.

⁸⁴ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*, Updated Edition, (New York: Harper Perennial, 2002), 486-487.

Independent noted: “Inasmuch as nine-tenths of our new citizens are from other states, and very few of them had ever heard of the future Rome of the year of our Lord 1870, while it took several calendars to calculate the six months since the foundation of the city, it was a remarkable election.”⁸⁵ O. G. Chase noted that despite low voting numbers, residents were happy to have partaken in the election, especially considering the political and cultural mix of the first elected officials in the city.⁸⁶

The results of the election were as follows: Peter Cline Buffington, a former Confederate Colonel, and the city’s largest landowner, was elected Mayor; Former Union General John Hunt Oley was elected as City Recorder. Elected as City Councilmen were Delos W. Emmons, a New York Democrat and vice-president of the Central Land Company; E.T. Mitchel, J.O. Wall, and E.S. Holderby, all three local businessmen and lawyers. Ike Mitchel was elected as Sheriff.⁸⁷ The mix of former Union and Confederate officers, Republicans, and Democrats reinforced the notion that Huntington did not want or promote sectional conflict, instead advocating for Huntington as a place of prosperity and peace. O. G. Chase, editor of the *Huntington Independent*, emphasized the city’s anti-sectionalist sentiments:

We are on the very border between the fire of the South and North, where all are taught to keep their bitter passion curbed, or renew an unwelcomed conflict. Men of the North are made welcome, because we look upon them as our leading manufacturers. Men of the South are welcome, because we believe they intend to take a hand at labor with us. We hear nothing of politics. North, South, East, and West can all unite here, and work together on neutral ground. The man who would stir up a political broil in Huntington would be hissed out by every respectable citizen. *We are here to work*, and we are going to do it.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ O.G. Chase, “The City Election,” *Huntington Independent*, January 4, 1872.

⁸⁶ Chase, “The City Election,”

⁸⁷ O.G. Chase, “City Council,” *Huntington Independent*, January 11, 1872.

⁸⁸ O. G. Chase, “What Nature Has Done for Huntington,” *Huntington Independent*, February 15, 1872.

Commerce was to take precedence over sectional conflict at a time when the North and the South struggled through Reconstruction and largely lacked common goals.

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

With the construction of railroad facilities starting in March 1870, many who came to Huntington were laborers. The C&O brought them in from Ohio and Pennsylvania, while many freedmen migrated from Virginia and North Carolina to Huntington. In 1870, thus, most people living in Huntington worked for the C&O Railroad. Huntington biographer Cerinda Evans although she mainly discussed the mobility of white northern migrants, stated:

Early in 1871, the people began to come into the new city from all parts of the country, mostly at first from the New England States and New York. During the year, a number of industries were established and the city began to grow and take definite shape. The Central Land Company built two rows of houses, one of frame and one of brick for the use of the engineers and others during construction of the railroad and the Chesapeake & Ohio buildings and repair shops in Huntington. These houses were rented later to railroad employees.⁸⁹

Throughout 1871, as people migrated to Huntington, O.G. Chase wrote editorials promoting the new city. Press releases concerning Huntington appeared in newspapers across the country. The C&O, along with Chase's editorials, heavily promoted the mineral wealth of West Virginia as a major Huntington asset, in hopes of attracting business people, laborers, and families. A weekly ad in the *Huntington Independent* that appeared as well in many other newspapers, by Delos W. Emmons listed reasons the city of Huntington promised future success. Aiming specifically at families, the ad stated:

The locality is *salubrious; accessible, and beautiful*, the Streets and Avenues have been laid out so as to combine convenience, taste and comfort. That portion of the City devoted to residences has been placed at a distance from the shops, factories, &c., and so

⁸⁹ Evans, *Collis Potter Huntington*, 526.

that prevailing winds, which blow *up* valley, will carry the smoke away from the dwellings. The State Normal School [Marshall College] is already in successful operation in the central part of the City; and the advantages thus offered by this first-class school for the education of the young of both sexes adds largely to the attractions of the place.⁹⁰

The grid design of Huntington served commerce and families that would find an easily navigable city. Eventually, the city needed to establish a municipal government, independent of the Central Land Company, to reach a point of legitimacy. In an editorial from the *Huntington Independent*, Chase discussed the benefits of infrastructure, graded streets, a park, and the role of the Central Land Company:

When the city shall be handed over to its inhabitants for their own control and government, they will receive, without a dollar of cost to them, many miles of beautiful avenues, one hundred feet in width, and streets not less than eighty feet in width, all graded and ready for use. They will have in the center of the city, "Huntington Park," studded with towering oaks of the native forest, to adorn and beautify the city of their new homes.⁹¹

Cities across the country were building parks and retrofitting streets, transforming older cities. A March 1872 article from the *Huntington Independent* noted: "There are about 5,000 fruit trees within the corporate limits of Huntington. The most of these are a young and thrifty growth of the finest selections of the apple, with many peach, quince, pear, cherry, and other varieties of fruit. The largest orchard, attracting the most attention, is the one between 7th and 12th Street, running from 2nd to Fifth avenues."⁹² The first city government of Huntington, indeed, received a fledgling, yet functioning city with many advantages older cities struggled to accommodate.

Because Huntington was intended for commerce and business, Collis Huntington and his associates also needed to attract business-minded people, especially to establish an economy both beyond and supportive of the railroad. Journalists, politicians, capitalists, laborers seeking

⁹⁰ Delos W. Emmons, "The City of Huntington, At the Head of Reliable Navigation on the Ohio River," *Huntington Independent*, August 23, 1871.

⁹¹ O.G. Chase, "The Cities of Huntington and Charleston," *Huntington Independent*, December 11, 1871.

⁹² O.G. Chase, *The Huntington Independent*, Thursday, August 15, 1872, 3.

employment, and persons looking to start their own business scrutinized newspapers to find information about the new city established in West Virginia. Indeed, many editorials appeared in newspapers across the country. These accounts generally cast Huntington in a positive light.

One article from the *Bristol News* (Virginia) corresponding to the *Cincinnati Commercial* about a travel account of Huntington featured some interesting information. The *Bristol News* noted that Huntington offered less opportunity than the city of Bristol, and stated: “that Bristol will surpass even the thoroughly blown [sic] and mapped City of Huntington.”⁹³ The article starts out with an interesting wisecrack: “Reader, you have heard of Huntington? Of course, you have, or else you are not a reader. It is the city of magnificent expectations.”⁹⁴ The author notes that available property that was still for sale: “In all the hotels and steamboats you see maps and plats of the city hanging up, accompanied with the information that there are a few more lots undisposed of and so forth.”⁹⁵ Despite the quip about readers possibly not knowing about the city of Huntington, the account closes with a quote from a transient worker: “I fell in with a man from Greenup County, Ky., who said he had come to the city of magnificent expectations to get work but had failed. “I can’t find the men of this here business,” he said, “I’ll never run around again looking for cities [whar] there ain’t any” I suggested that Huntington is a good place for a city. “Yes,” said he, “the location is pretty large.”⁹⁶

The article, though at first appearing innocuous, undercuts the message that the young city of Huntington was a good place to find gainful employment. The Bristol paper’s argument that their city would surpass Huntington surely was intended to damp enthusiasm for the new

⁹³ “Huntington: An Effort to make a City,” *Bristol News*, Bristol, Virginia & Tennessee, Friday, February 2, 1872.

⁹⁴ “Huntington: An Effort to make a City,” *Bristol News*, February 2, 1872.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

city. As cities across the country promoted themselves, the *Huntington Independent* reported on another dissuasion emanating from Chicago: “A dispatch from Chicago to Cincinnati says: “Mechanics and laborers in various parts of the country are making a great mistake in coming to this city in search of work. The supply of labor of all sorts is far in excess of the demand.” Chase interjected: “We would suggest to some of them to move to Huntington, where work is plenty, and wages good.”⁹⁷

Despite rival cities continued negativity towards Huntington, people still noticed the young conurbation and chose to migrate for economic opportunities not available to them at their current locations. In turn, if skilled and unskilled laborers did not take an interest in Huntington, then the population would not have grown. As the founders of Huntington, business people, and new residents all played a role in constructing a new city, challenges arose. The residents of Huntington met the challenges by implementing social and cultural practices from their previous locations, making the new city reflect larger national trends.

SAY, THEY ARE ALL THE RAGE, BENEVOLENT SOCIETIES THAT IS!

The tremendous rate of development and transformation in late nineteenth century America redesigned urban social order. American cities and towns grown since the colonial era sometimes lost their sense of community while transitioning from a homogenous social structure to a heterogeneous structure.⁹⁸ New residents in the young city of Huntington comprised an eclectic mix of people of various socioeconomic status, race, religion, and gender. The neighboring town of Guyandotte did little to influence the new city; early residents of

⁹⁷ *Huntington Independent*, February 01, 1872.

⁹⁸ Mohl, *The Making of Urban America*, 10-16.

Huntington did not replicate local social, cultural, and political norms of that small town.⁹⁹ Instead, early residents of Huntington, seeking to establish cultural and social community, quickly formed benevolent groups such as the Women's Aid Society, The Ladies Industrial Society, the Lyceum Club, and the Huntington Aid Society that provided free concerts, debates, lectures, dinners, and other various forms of entertainment, and fundraising for local poor people, churches, and schools. The formation of civic, benevolent, and fraternal associations in Huntington resulted not only from a sociocultural gap but as a reaction to vice. The *Huntington Independent* noted: "Every branch of society for the elevation of the morals and promotion of the great network of civilization, is now at work here. Ignorance, drunkenness and gambling are becoming a stench in the nostrils of our better citizens."¹⁰⁰

There is scant information about the earliest years of Huntington's social and cultural practices. The available sources, however, suggest that benevolent groups began operating in the city from the 1870s. Huntington's first city directory from 1891 lists four Masonic chapters, two Knights of Honor chapters, Granddaughters of the American Revolution (G.A.R.), one chapter of the Knights of Pythias, the International Order of Odd Fellows along with the International Order of Red Men. Beyond the rising number of benevolent groups in Huntington, some unions as well formed, such as the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers by the late 1870s.¹⁰¹ The few surviving newspaper accounts provide enough information to illustrate their role in the young city.

In April 1872, a notice to residents interested in forming a relief society appeared in the *Huntington Independent*. Carpenters, mechanics, and other workers migrated to Huntington

⁹⁹ See Joe Geiger, Jr., "The Tragic Fate of Guyandotte," *West Virginia History*, Vol. 54, (1995), pp. 28-41.

¹⁰⁰ O.G. Chase, *Huntington Independent*, May 23, 1872.

¹⁰¹ 1891-92, *Huntington, West Virginia City Directory*, (Huntington: Potts & Cammack, 1891), 14-16.

mainly working for themselves. By 1872, Huntington had reached a population of 2,000 residents. Economically, many residents had financial stability, but others bought plats and lived in tents.¹⁰² It is unclear whether these residents were waiting for building materials or only had enough money to purchase a lot. The need for a relief society in Huntington emerged when socioeconomic stratification became prevalent. The concerned citizen stated and wrote in the paper: “It seems important, that, as much of suffering and want as there is, and likely to be in this community of strangers, that something besides individual charity should be secured. All of every creed, are invited.”¹⁰³

Huntington’s development proceeded, often through reactions to local events, including fires, destitution, and drunkenness. The combination of misfortune, poverty, and vice set in motion a class-structured reaction. Huntington’s earliest charitable and benevolent groups reflected an emerging urban class structure formed because of social and cultural elements common in nineteenth-century urban America. Very few records of Huntington’s first benevolent groups exist, except some *Huntington Independent* articles highlighting their deeds. Frustratingly, the names of the women who formed two of the benevolent groups were never given in the paper, though names of the men involved with the Lyceum Club were usually listed in the *Huntington Independent* articles. Nevertheless, the first mention of benevolent groups in Huntington were two formed by women.

The Women’s Aid Society and the Ladies Industrial Society worked to raise funds for public schools, churches, and the city’s poor. Often, the two groups held banquets that provided

¹⁰² *Huntington Independent*, Huntington, West Virginia, April 4, 1872.

¹⁰³ *Huntington Independent*, Huntington, West Virginia, April 4, 1872.

singing, live music, and literature or Bible readings. One example from the *Huntington Independent* complimented the local women:

The kind ladies of our town set to work last Monday, and in two or three hours time, raised near fifty dollars in cash, for the relief of Arthur Smith and family who had lost all their clothing by the fire at the river. God bless the good Samaritans.”¹⁰⁴

Concern for down and out residents, if Huntington’s charitable groups followed national trends, was more than likely conducted by women, as in this case:

A man named H. A. Carney, has been confined in a shanty here, by himself, for several days with rheumatism. It seemed that he was suddenly taken down, and when found was entirely helpless. A purse was raised for him at once and he was sent to his home in Middleport (OH).¹⁰⁵

Another charitable organization in Huntington, the Huntington Aid Society, was mentioned only once in the issues of the *Huntington Independent* from 1871 to 1873. As with the Women’s Aid Society and the Women’s Industrial Society, the paper did not list the members’ names. Again, it seems likely, given national trends, that the Huntington Aid Society was formed by women, as it appeared in the same type of charity work as the other two women’s group in Huntington:

The Huntington Aid Society has been doing a good thing recently, in the purchasing of some school books for some of our poor children whose parents are not able to provide for them as the circumstances demand. —In an age and a community like this, there is no need of any of the children, however poor, being without an education. —With a good free school system, and by the assistance of such an organization as we have here for the benefit of the poor, we trust our entire community of boys and girls may grow up useful and well educated men and women. This act of charity is thus bestowing upon the young

¹⁰⁴ “Local Items,” O.G. Chase, *Huntington Independent*, May 30, 1872. Second block quote is also from the Local Items section of this issue from the *Huntington Independent*.

¹⁰⁵ “Local Items.” The New York State Board of Charities listed in its annual report of 1872, The Women’s Aid Society as a charitable group working with orphans. It is not clear if the Women’s Aid Society in Huntington was directly connected to the New York chapter, but more than likely, the Huntington group was started by women that migrated from New York. See *New York (State) Board of Charities, Annual Report: 1872, Volume 5, Part II, 1872*, (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1872). 125.

so important a gift as a few school books, speaks well for the society, and is deserving much credit.¹⁰⁶

As the women's charity groups of Huntington focused on poverty and education, the men of Huntington set their attention to public lectures and debates.

Prominent businessmen formed the Lyceum Club in late 1871. These men organized frequent public readings of literature followed by debates.¹⁰⁷ The Lyceum also provided public lectures, discussions, and concerts for educational and entertainment purposes. Though the Lyceum Club primarily engaged residents with educational and literary pursuits, they did not generally raise money for impoverished Huntingtonians but did donate some money to the first public school. One example of the Lyceum Club's activities focused on female suffrage, as noted in the *Huntington Independent*: "A large number of ladies favored the Lyceum with their presence on Tuesday night. The discussion on Female Suffrage was well conducted, but the decision rendered by the Lyceum was in favor of the negative."¹⁰⁸ An account from the *Shepherdstown (WV) Register*, noting "The Lyceum's question for debate last night was resolved, that women be allowed the elective franchise. The arguments produced pro and con were good, but it was decided by the house that the negative had carried the weight of the argument."¹⁰⁹ Neither newspaper indicated if women participated in the debate. Though women's suffrage did not gain support from the debate, women did attend the lecture and leaves us wondering who argued in favor of women's suffrage.

¹⁰⁶ "Local Items," O.G. Chase, *Huntington Independent*, January 16, 1873.

¹⁰⁷ "The Lyceum," O.G. Chase, *Huntington Independent*, December 19, 1872. Members of the Lyceum Club included early businessmen such as Dr. Moncuro, W.S. Downer, Dr. Campbell, Rev. C. S. Walker, Mr. James, Mr. Simms, and Eustice Gibson.

¹⁰⁸ "Local Items," O.G. Chase, *Huntington Independent*, January 16, 1873.

¹⁰⁹ "For the Register," *Shepherdstown Register*, Shepherdstown, West Virginia, January 18, 1873.

African Americans in Huntington were excluded from its voluntary associations. However, early black residents used the church as a means for civic, political and economic ambitions. Historian Janette Thomas Greenwood discusses differences between white and black social organizations in the 1870s. “Black social life, like that of the white community, centered on church activities and social organizations but in the 1870s reflected no class divisions. Churches, fraternities, sororities, and benevolent societies consolidated the black community while serving valuable welfare functions as well.”¹¹⁰ Cicero Fain points out that Huntington’s early African American residents relied on the church as a means of social, political, and economic uplift.¹¹¹ It is difficult to ascertain what African American voluntary associations existed in the first decades of Huntington’s history. By the 1890s, though, newspapers provide evidence that black fraternal organizations existed. A Huntington *Herald* article from December 14, 1895, discussed the role of clubs, voluntary associations, and benevolent groups of black Huntingtonians: “The colored people have lodges and organizations of a secret or social nature, which do much good. These are the lodges of Masons, Odd Fellows, Knights of Pythias, the order of St. Luke, etc.”¹¹² White and black benevolent and fraternal organizations in Huntington coexisted while working independently of each other.

“The last third of the nineteenth century was a time of dramatic proliferation of voluntary associations. The population of America’s towns and cities was multiplying rapidly, and the number of organizations was growing even faster.”¹¹³ Huntington by 1891 had a population of 11,000 people, with 8,876 whites (87.8%) and 1,231 (12.2%) African Americans compared to a

¹¹⁰ Janette Thomas Greenwood, *Bittersweet Legacy: The Black and White 'Better Classes' in Charlotte, 1850-1910*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 71.

¹¹¹ Fain, III, “Race, River, and the Railroad.” 151-52.

¹¹² *Huntington Herald*, December 14, 1895.

¹¹³ Robert I. Rotberg, and Gene A. Brucker, *Patterns of Social Capital: Stability and Change in Historical Perspective*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 187.

population of 2,000 (94.4% white and 5.6% black) people in 1872.¹¹⁴ Information gathered from newspapers indicated in 1872 at least one-hundred or more African Americans resided in Huntington.¹¹⁵ As the city grew, so did the number of benevolent groups, following the curve of social and cultural trends in the United States. As the C&O brought together a diverse mix of people, and Huntington tried to establish itself as a bipartisan city, racial dynamics may have developed due to migratory ethnocentricity and economics.

AFRICAN AMERICANS IN EARLY HUNTINGTON

When Collis P. Huntington built the western part of the Transcontinental Railroad from 1863 to 1869, he employed Chinese labor.¹¹⁶ However, in building the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad, Huntington employed freedmen and native whites. While “Huntington’s flourishing economy and reasonably accepting racial atmosphere drew increasing numbers of black migrants to the sociocultural and economic prospects not available further south,” racism certainly was part of the city’s culture.¹¹⁷ Indications from the *Huntington Independent* suggest a significant percentage of white laborers migrated from the South, helping to precipitate racial tensions in Huntington.

¹¹⁴ Richard L. Forstall, *Population of States and Counties of the United States, 1790-1990*. (Washington, D.C.: Department of Commerce, U.S. Bureau of the Census Population Division, 1996, Part II), 178.

¹¹⁵ *Huntington Independent*, September 4, 1872. Local African American, John Long advocated that Black Huntingtonians vote, especially as the state constitution was on the verge of being rewritten by enfranchised Confederates, which in turn stripped African Americans of their right to hold political office in West Virginia.

¹¹⁶ Iris Chang, *The Chinese in America: A Narrative History*, (New York: Penguin, 2004), 53-56.

¹¹⁷ Fain, III, “Race, River, and the Railroad.” 152. Fain’s dissertation is the best work on African Americans in Huntington, West Virginia. No other work goes into such historical depths about the emergence of an African American community in the city.

Following the Civil War, many former Confederates migrated north, west, even to Mexico and Brazil.¹¹⁸ Another group, freedmen, similarly looked for new opportunities as well, especially with railroads.

In spring of 1871, just months after the incorporation of Huntington, West Virginia, a group of black migrants arrived into the village. Like so many before them, this group had traveled the James River and Kanawha Turnpike to traverse the Appalachian Mountains before arriving at their destination. They were led by thirty-one-year-old itinerant preacher Nelson Barnett, who, after spending some time preaching at churches throughout the Ohio Valley, acquired a job on an upstart railroad, and then walked back to his homeland in Buckingham County, Virginia. There, he spread the word to friends and family of “honest work to be had” on the railroad. Soon, he explained, Huntington would be a key station of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, and jobs and other blacks would surely follow.¹¹⁹

As Huntington advertised a peaceful political atmosphere, African American men and women, along with many southern whites, converged on the new city. Politicians in Huntington tried to maintain a bipartisan and neutral atmosphere, but with the passage of the Flick Amendment, non-land owning former Confederates gained political rights and sought control of West Virginia by planning to rewrite the State Constitution.¹²⁰

The newly enfranchised Confederates, mainly Democrats, focused their attention on amending the State constitution and gained political control of West Virginia in 1870. Mark A. Snell points out that Democrats were “generally opposed to anything that Republican Unionists had achieved.”¹²¹ Of primary importance to West Virginia Democrats were reestablishing the

¹¹⁸ See Walter Earl Pittman, *Rebels in the Rockies: Confederate Irregulars in the Western Territories*, (Jefferson: McFarland Publishing, 2014).

¹¹⁹ Fain, III, “Race, River, and the Railroad.” 83.

¹²⁰ Andrew Slap and Ken Fones-Wolf, *Reconstructing Appalachia: The Civil War’s Aftermath*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 240-241. The Flick Amendment proposed ending the test oaths for former nonland-owning Confederates in exchange for ratifying the Fifteenth Amendment. The Flick Amendment passed in 1870 and enfranchised Confederates sought political control of the State for the first time since Statehood was granted in 1863.

¹²¹ Mark A. Snell, *West Virginia and the Civil War: Mountaineers Are Always Free*, (Mount Pleasant: Arcadia Publishing, 2011), 188.

county court system, increased term lengths for political offices, the secret ballot, and the free school system. Historian John Alexander Williams notes about the second state constitution: “The finished product itself was essentially an updated version of the Virginia constitution of 1851.”¹²² As Democrats gained political control of West Virginia, they attempted to return the young state’s government to a system that resembled Virginia’s antebellum years.

The *Huntington Independent* advocated against the second state constitution as it would strip poor people of upward socioeconomic mobility, terminate free public schools and ultimately disenfranchise African Americans.¹²³ Proposed with the ratification of the second constitution, Democrats also introduced a bill that “restricted officeholding to whites only.”¹²⁴ Building up to the elections of 1872, Huntington overall experienced a peaceful social and cultural atmosphere, although some events indicated a divided population in the young city.

In July 1872, the case of Dandridge Hopkins, a young African American man accused of stealing a saddle blanket from Patrick O’Brien, resulted in public strife. When Hopkins tried to explain that he lost the blanket and offered to pay for it, O’Brien did not believe the young man and threatened him with violence. As a result of the altercation, two factions formed in the street, one group siding with O’Brien, while the other group, a mix of whites and blacks, came to the aid of Hopkins. As the two groups were about to erupt in a massive brawl, the Sheriff fired off warning shots, dispersing the mobs.¹²⁵ The newspaper paid little attention to this event, possibly to diminish its focus on racial tension, which might undermine the image of a city intended for peaceful commerce. The short article labeled the group of men who sided with O’Brien “white

¹²² John Alexander Williams, *West Virginia: A History*, (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2001), 92.

¹²³ *Huntington Independent*, Huntington, West Virginia, September 12, 1872.

¹²⁴ Snell, *West Virginia and the Civil War*: 188.

¹²⁵ L.C. Chase, *Huntington Independent*, July 22, 1872.

negroes,” intended as an insult to the Irish involved with assaulting the freedmen. The fight highlights the existence of a divided community, reflecting the complexity of racial dynamics during Reconstruction.

Additional incidents reflect the complex racial atmosphere, such as former Confederate soldier Judge J.H. Ferguson, who helped write the test oaths for former Confederates; later on, he helped repeal the oaths in favor of universal suffrage in West Virginia.¹²⁶ On August 16, 1872, Judge Ferguson was standing along Third Avenue near Burdick’s Hall expounding on the new constitution, when a wagon belonging to local businessmen Harper & Webb

passed with a band of music, drumming up dancers to go to Burdick’s Hall. The music being more interesting than the Judge’s balderdash, the crowd naturally enough followed the wagon and induced them to stop and play a tune. This was too much for the great political leader; he stopped and said to the crowd that Democrats once had the faculty of cleaning out such nuisances, there by encouraging a mob, When Ferguson chimed in that he knew the concern to be a black abolition move led by Harper & Webb and Chase. Here again he showed his ignorance and malice.¹²⁷

With political changes on the horizon in West Virginia, Huntington illustrated to the southern part of the state that the changing political atmosphere would not disrupt its relatively peaceful climate, as shown by the case of Dandridge Hopkins, and Judge Ferguson’s failure to incite a Democratic mob to confront a racially mixed crowd.

As for the political side of Huntington’s black community, Robert Long, an entrepreneur, political activist and a revered leader within the community, stressed the importance of voting:¹²⁸

I have heard several speeches for, and one or two against the new Constitution. I am satisfied from the malicious slurs which I heard against Yankees, radicals and northern men in general, that the new Constitution and Camden’s friends are opposed to our best interests. Now let every colored man in Cabell County rally to the polls next Thursday,

¹²⁶ Stephen D. Engle, “Mountaineer Reconstruction: Blacks in the Political Reconstruction of West Virginia,” *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 78, No. 3 (Summer, 1993), pp. 140.

¹²⁷ L.C. Chase, *Huntington Independent*, August 22, 1872.

¹²⁸ Fain, III, “Race, River, and the Railroad.” 83, 123.

come early and vote Republican who are not trying to make political capital by exciting prejudice against our color. Over one hundred of our race are in Huntington, we obey the laws and pay our taxes as well as whites, and we have the kindest feeling for our old masters in the south, but we cannot vote with them and will not help to elevate them into power as long as they indulge in unkind remarks against us or the glorious Yankees who shed their blood so freely for our freedom. Let every colored man rally and vote down the new Constitution and support Gov. Jacob, as Governor of all people.¹²⁹

Long's political address to Black Huntingtonians highlights the complex racial dynamics in the city and surrounding communities and clarifies the political leanings of black Huntington. In local politics, both Democrats and Republicans in subsequent election years viewed Black Huntingtonians as an important voting bloc.¹³⁰

As Black Huntingtonians strove for political involvement, gainful employment was another avenue of breaking barriers. By 1871, The Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad employed 5,000 black laborers, many of whom worked throughout the state as rail lines progressed eastward to Virginia.¹³¹ As historian Ronald Eller noted, "the C&O Railroad attracted much of the Negro labor to West Virginia, resulting in a labor drain in Virginia. The *Charlottesville Chronicle* editor confirmed, "They will listen much more readily to the agents of the railroad companies than to the planter."¹³² Black residents of Huntington entered the labor force, mainly working low-level jobs with the railroad, often positions more hazardous than those occupied by white counterparts. Meanwhile, black women entered domestic service jobs or were homemakers. Throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century, low-end industrial jobs and domestic work comprised the

¹²⁹ L.C. Chase, "From A Colored Man: To the Colored Voters of Cabell Co.," *Huntington Independent*, September 22, 1872.

¹³⁰ See Fain, III, "Race, River, and the Railroad." 270-271.

¹³¹ Charles Turner, "The Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad in Reconstruction, 1865-1873," *The North Carolina Historical Review*, Vol. XXXI, No. 1, 1954. 160.

¹³² Ronald D. Eller, "Mountain Road: A Study of the Construction of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad in Southern West Virginia, 1867-1873," Masters Thesis., (University of North Carolina, 1973), 47.

majority of jobs held by African Americans in Huntington not available from previous places of living.¹³³

Because the C & O Railroad offered upward socioeconomic mobility for African Americans in Huntington, both the city and the railroad benefitted significantly; Cicero Fain noted:

Individually and collectively, during the latter part of the nineteenth-century black workers' labor and agency were critical to the construction of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, the industrialization of southern West Virginia, and the rise of Huntington. Evidence indicates that most of Huntington's black laboring class, male and female, like black workers nationwide, found gainful employment in Huntington's emergent industrial capitalist economy. Importantly, as the city grew, black residents benefited from increasing occupational diversity.¹³⁴

The migrant black population settling in Huntington and seeking employment with the C&O contributed greatly to the city and completion of C&O lines throughout West Virginia.

Huntington's efforts to have a peaceful city where commerce outranked sectional conflict slowly eroded as tensions nonetheless re-emerged in the final years of the nineteenth century. These conflicts as elsewhere, created an occupational system based on race, locking out Black Huntingtonians from high-level jobs. Despite this, African American residents of Huntington took advantage of the city's rising economy and established the seeds of a growing black middle-class community.

A NEED FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

As Cicero Fain noted, Robert Long, I. V. Bryant, James Woodson, and Nelson Barnett worked devotedly to uplift Black Huntington, organizing churches, schools, social gatherings

¹³³ See Fain, III, "Race, River, and the Railroad." 128-152.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 152.

and helping with employment.¹³⁵ One particular interest for the early black community of Huntington was education that they strived for like the rest of the city. West Virginia's second constitution passed in 1872 and imperiled public schools. While West Virginia was one of the first states to offer free public education, the second constitution put public schools in the hands of local funding instead of state funding. Residents of Huntington worked quickly to organize the community in support of a public school, opening the first of several in November 1872 and one school for Huntington's African American children in 1873.

At its founding, the state of West Virginia expressed the crucial need for free public education. Otis Rice and Stephen Brown note that, following the Civil War. "Many West Virginians, nevertheless, shared a common American belief that a close link existed between education and material progress, and they did not want to be left further behind than they were."¹³⁶ Gordon Battelle, chairman of the 1863 Constitutional Convention committee, looked to Reverend Alexander Martin, a professor at Allegheny College, Pennsylvania, for advice. "Within two weeks Martin presented "An Outline of a System of General Education for the New State," based on the premise that "the education of the people . . . is the only exhaustless mine which the people possesses" and should be "as free as the air . . . and the light of Heaven."¹³⁷ Indeed, Battelle looked to follow and implement a northern-style education system.

Martin's plan arranged for a system financed using state appropriations, revenue "from a permanent school fund, and local taxes administered by a state board of education, a state

¹³⁵ Fain states that these men often helped members of the African American community find jobs in Huntington. See Fain, III, "Race, River, and the Railroad." pp. 152, 248, 253, 271.

¹³⁶ Otis K. Rice and Stephen W. Brown, *West Virginia: A History*, Second Edition, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 239.

¹³⁷ Rice and Brown, *West Virginia: A History*, 239.

superintendent, county superintendents, and local officials.”¹³⁸ Though the convention adopted Martin’s plan, it declined the funding method and restricted the source of school revenues to the proceeds of forfeited or seized lands. However, by December 1863, the legislature implemented the plan of Andrew F. Ross, a principal from West Liberty Academy. Ross’s plan mandated a six-month school term, broke up counties into townships, and placed the election of county superintendents in the hands of residents. To fund this system, the legislature implemented a new property tax, not to exceed \$0.10 on the dollar for every \$100.00 collected. Additionally, Ross’s plan also required townships with 30 or more African American children to provide for their education, but in separate schools from whites.

Ross’s plan proved ineffective, particularly in sparsely populated areas of the state, and some locales reduced school terms from six months to four months, citing a lack of available funds. Despite some of these setbacks in West Virginia’s public education system, school terms increased in more populated areas as more children attended. Though the new constitution passed in 1872, and Republican newspapers warned of the possible dangers it presented to public schools, not much changed:

The Constitution placed control of the school fund in a board composed of the governor, superintendent of free schools, auditor and treasurer; required county sheriffs to collect all school levies and make annual settlements with county courts; and continued the requirement of separate schools for white and black pupils. The term of the state superintendent was extended to four years, but the office became political, leading to a request by the State Teachers Association that it be permitted to designate “some able, efficient and practical educator” for the position.¹³⁹

The politicization of the superintendent’s office was just one of many problems that occurred following the implementation of the new constitution.

¹³⁸ Rice and Brown, *West Virginia: A History*, 239.

¹³⁹ Rice and Brown, *West Virginia: A History*, 240.

Compounding these administrative and financial issues, textbooks also became a problem. Worried about abuses in the approval of textbooks by counties, a bipartisan state commission of nine members that included the state superintendent of schools formed.¹⁴⁰ The Republican education ideals originally produced by West Virginia's first constitution, undermined by these problems, had produced a lackluster system. Huntington, though, worked quickly and efficiently to raise money for its first public schools, not burdened by an older school system. The need and desire for public education is expressed from the city's earliest days in its newspapers. Early residents brought attention to the issue. Though the residents of Huntington comprised an eclectic mix of Republicans and Democrats, a majority of residents in the 1870s came from New York and Massachusetts, who brought with them republican cultural practices in business and educational foundations.

Huntingtonians understood the impending passage of the state's second constitution and worked collectively to raise money for the school in anticipation of losing state funding. Noting the impending withdrawal of state funding for schools in West Virginia, residents of Huntington paid close attention to the politicized debates around mandatory education, as the *Huntington Independent* noted:

The new Constitution retains a State superintendent but requires him to reside at the capital, upon a salary of \$1,500 and no mileage, nor house rent. This program will not allow him more than a net of \$500 per annum, and it is made an elective office, thereby keeping our schools under the corrupting influences of political strife.¹⁴¹

Further grievances listed in the article discuss the "depravity" of reducing the school year requirements to three months; other states, the neighboring State of Kentucky, for example, required six months and as of 1872 no school law in the nation allowed less than four months of

¹⁴⁰ O.G. Chase, *Huntington Independent*, March 21, 1872.

¹⁴¹ O.G. Chase, "School Matters," *Huntington Independent*, Thursday, March 28, 1872.

school per year. The anxiety of politically-economizing the state's free schools created fears for misuse of funds considering West Virginia had a budget of \$200,000 for free schools in the fiscal year of 1871.¹⁴²

Citing the dangers of politicized superintendents, the *Independent* noted a major concern about the school budget and yearly expenditures: "Let an irresponsible and cheap man take that position, and the above sum will be squandered without any regard to the educational interests of this state."¹⁴³ The paper expressed the fear that hindering free public education would reduce West Virginia to the status of Virginia, which the paper considered the most illiterate and bankrupt state in the Union.¹⁴⁴ Impeding the future prosperity of West Virginia by the lack of education struck a chord of fear with people all over the state, but especially in the city of Huntington.

The community of relative strangers banded together by organizing public events to raise school funds. The Women's Industrial League, the Women's Aid Society, and the Lyceum Club pitched in to help raise funds for building the schoolhouse and buying other essential school supplies. With a population of 2,000 people, residents of Huntington generated a decent sum of money, but not quite enough to pay for the construction of the school.¹⁴⁵ However, Collis P. Huntington donated \$5,000 from the Central Land Company to help with the construction of the

¹⁴² The value of \$200,000 in 1871 is the equivalent to \$3,599,582.00, and with West Virginia's population of 442,014 in 1870, the purchasing power of \$200,000 was a significant amount of money to fund schools. Richard L. Forstall, *Population of States and Counties of the United States: 1790-1990*, (Washington, D.C., Department of Commerce, U.S. Bureau of the Census Population Division, 1996, Part II), 3. Monetary estimates come from Consumer Price Index. www.minneapolisfed.org/community/financial-and-economic-education/cpi-calculator-information/consumer-price-index-1800.

¹⁴³ O.G. Chase, "School Matters," *Huntington Independent*, March 28, 1872. The average fund for West Virginia schools in 1871 was roughly \$200,000, see "The Public School Fund," *Weekly Register*, Point Pleasant, West Virginia, November 23, 1871.

¹⁴⁴ L.C. Chase, "School Matters,"

¹⁴⁵ L.C. Chase, *Huntington Independent*, October 31, 1871.

school and to cover costs of fundamental school supplies.¹⁴⁶ With this large donation, the city quickly contracted to build the school, and on November 28, 1872, the city's first public school opened.¹⁴⁷ Segregation in public schools was the law under the 1872 statute, and the city's African American children would have to wait almost exactly a year before having the opportunity to go to school.

While West Virginia's first constitution did not specifically prohibit integrated public schools, nonetheless, the practice of segregation was prevalent.¹⁴⁸ Though a school for African American children existed in Guyandotte in 1870 still, the first school for African American children opened in Huntington in 1873, "in the log house on Cemetery Hill, just east of the town and a little west of Guyandotte."¹⁴⁹ Under the 1872 West Virginia Constitution, public schools for African American children were provided only if more than twenty children between the ages of 6 to 21 lived in a district.¹⁵⁰ Because of this provision, Huntington and Guyandotte had to share a school, thus determining its location.

As with white schools in town, the first school for African American children in Huntington resulted from the efforts of the city's residents. Here again, Cicero Fain outlines the foundations of Huntington's black social and cultural community resulting from the efforts of Robert Long, Nelson Barnett, James Woodson, and Isaac Vinton Bryant.¹⁵¹ In 1874, Robert

¹⁴⁶ L.C. Chase, *Huntington Independent*, October 31, 1871.

¹⁴⁷ L.C. Chase, "Suggestions to the Scholars Connected with the Public Schools of Huntington," *Huntington Independent*, November 28, 1872.

¹⁴⁸ Constitution of West Virginia, 1863, Article X, Sections I-IV, Education.

¹⁴⁹ See Fain, III, "Race, River, and the Railroad." 253. Fain does not provide a precise location for the first African American school in the city.

¹⁵⁰ Constitution of West Virginia, 1872, Article XII, Section 8.

¹⁵¹ See Fain, III, "Race, River, and the Railroad." 275. Robert Long, though not a long-term resident of Huntington, was a local businessman, and political activist. Woodson, father of Carter G. Woodson, was a foreman for the C & O Railroad. Nelson Barnett was a preacher and a foreman for the C & O Railroad. I.V. Bryant, at seventeen years old became the first teacher at the Guyandotte School for African American children and taught at the school in Huntington when it opened in 1873.

Long donated a building on Twelfth Street & Sixth Avenue, and the *Huntington Advertiser* noted that the school was a “very neat building.”¹⁵² Despite the delay, the school for Huntington’s African American children moved multiple times through the remainder of the 1870s.¹⁵³ Although Huntington’s African American population increased from the 1870s to 1880, due to a lack of funding, only one school was available for the city’s African American children.¹⁵⁴ Not until 1891 when Douglass High School opened did Huntington have two schools for African American children.¹⁵⁵

Whereas Huntington’s African American residents worked to open the first school for African American children throughout 1873, white residents hastened to open a second school for the city’s white children in the previous year. Efforts to open another public school at Marshall College quickly arose through city council and the president of Marshall College. In September 1872, the West Virginia Board of Regents agreed to add a public school at Marshall College with the condition that Huntington residents pay tuition and fees.¹⁵⁶ However, Marshall College President James E. Morrow did not agree to that stipulation and offered that if the city of Huntington paid the teachers’ salaries, all tuition and fees would be waived.¹⁵⁷ As these first two schools were being organized, councilmen John Hagen and Delos W. Emmons were given the task of opening yet another public school in the Spring Hill District.¹⁵⁸ The councilmen were

¹⁵² *Huntington Advertiser*, Huntington, West Virginia, October 22, 1874.

¹⁵³ See Fain, III, “Race, River, and the Railroad.” 254-256.

¹⁵⁴ See Fain, III, “Race, River, and the Railroad.” 253-254.

¹⁵⁵ Article XII, Section 8 of the 1872 constitution made segregation in West Virginia public schools a law.

¹⁵⁶ L.C. Chase, “City Council Minutes,” *Huntington Independent*, September 19, 1872.

¹⁵⁷ L.C. Chase, *Huntington Independent*, October 3, 1872.

¹⁵⁸ The newspaper does not provide an exact date for when the other public school opened; however, subsequent articles discussing the public schools of Huntington after November 28, 1872, reference school as “all public schools.” See L.C. Chase, *Huntington Independent*, December 19, 1872; December 26, 1872; and January 9, 1873.

granted full power to hire a teacher, establish the boundaries of the district, and make all necessary arrangements to start the school as soon as possible.¹⁵⁹

Huntington residents wrestled with the need to provide roughly 200 school-aged children the opportunity to get an education. The *Huntington Independent* noted the public sentiment regarding free schools in Huntington: “The free school system which has thus far received such limited attention in this State, we notice, is received most enthusiastically in this vicinity.”¹⁶⁰ From November 28, 1872, to January 1873, Huntington opened three public schools. While a majority of residents supported the idea of free public school, some evidence suggests either some people did not support the school or kept their children out of school due to economic necessities to their families.

The *Huntington Independent* noted public concern about compulsory attendance, and the Lyceum Club held an event that focused on the issue.¹⁶¹ Low enrollment rates when the first school opened in November 1872 triggered the discussion. The Lyceum Club offered a lecture by the Rev. Chas. Swan Walker, and a debate, with W.S. Downer arguing for the affirmative, while A. Mitchel Warner argued for the negative.¹⁶² Overall, residents agreed with Downer’s position that compulsory attendance was crucial to the educational needs of the city’s children. These concerns waned as enrollment rates gradually increased, and most if not all school-aged children were enrolled by January 1873.¹⁶³ The young city of Huntington’s public school system

¹⁵⁹ L.C. Chase, “City Council Minutes,” *Huntington Independent*, October 3, 1872.

¹⁶⁰ L.C. Chase, “The School System,” *Huntington Independent*, January 2, 1873.

¹⁶¹ L.C. Chase, “The Lyceum,” *Huntington Independent*, December 5, 1872.

¹⁶² Chase, “The Lyceum.” Also, for more information on W.S. Downer see Robert E. L. Krick, *Staff Officers in Gray: A Biographical Register of the Staff Officers in the Army of Northern Virginia*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 115.

¹⁶³ L.C. Chase, “School Matters,” *Huntington Independent*, January 30, 1873.

largely reflected the Republican influences and the majority of residents' beliefs that education helped maintain social order.

Since the start of the common school movement in the early nineteenth century, public schools served as means of socialization and social order. Amidst the social and economic fluctuations of the industrial era, public schools were viewed as increasingly important agents for indoctrinating behavioral compliance. Public schools encouraged patriotism and Protestant virtue that assimilated immigrants to American culture and helped to sustain social stability. Additionally, the cognitive functions of schools provided children with the ability to read, write, and understand mathematics, three crucial skills for social and occupational living. As Raymond Mohl argues, schools in nineteenth-century America served as a system to spread mainstream American culture and values through subsequent generations. In the case of Huntington, a major reason the schools appeared when they did was due in part to Collis P. Huntington, John Hagen, and Delos W. Emmons. "In this sense, Mohl writes, the schools reflected the interests and values of those who possessed economic and political power."¹⁶⁴

Urban education systems became increasingly important to late nineteenth-century Americans and underwent a process of centralization and bureaucratization resembling the restructuring of the American corporate economic structure. "Indeed, some big city school administrators conceived of the schools as educational factories, in which the principles of scientific management could be applied to the training of children. The purpose was to extend the influence of the school as widely as possible."¹⁶⁵ Huntington as well reflected the sentiment that schools should extend social and cultural influences as far as possible. L.C. Chase, the

¹⁶⁴ Mohl, *The New City*, 161.

¹⁶⁵ Mohl, *The New City*, 161.

second editor of the *Huntington Independent*, also served as the principal of the first public school and openly wrote editorials discussing various roles the public school system should teach children.

As Principal Chase outlined the expected well-mannered behavior of students while attending school, he also emphasized the importance of good social behavior while away from school:

On going home, enter the house quietly, and at once strive to make yourself useful in some valuable employment. Cultivate kindness and good manners at home as well as abroad. Never become idle. Do not lounge on the streets, in the evening or at any other time. Make it a point always to have your lessons thoroughly prepared. Appropriate to study as much time as needed.”¹⁶⁶

Chase conveys the importance of education for the continued welfare of family, city, and fellow citizens. Huntington recognized that it needed schools to establish and maintain social harmony as the population increased and more families arrived. Through community effort, the assistance of benevolent and fraternal associations, and Collis P. Huntington’s philanthropic disposition, the city of Huntington organized and opened three public schools from the Fall of 1872 to January 1873.

CONCLUSION

As the city of Huntington formed, and a community of relative strangers converged, the city gained the beginning stages of maturation. The efforts of Huntington’s founders to place commercial harmony above sectional differences established a precedent that largely prevented major conflict. Overall, residents were accepting of their diverse community except for the possibility of integrated public schools. Huntington’s evolution from a homogenous cornfield to

¹⁶⁶ L.C. Chase, “Suggestions to the Scholars Connected with the Public Schools of Huntington,” *Huntington Independent*, November 28, 1872.

a heterogeneous city included the growth and implementation of benevolent and fraternal associations that aided the community. Furthermore, the emergence of an African American community that flourished due to available jobs and a relatively peaceful racial atmosphere marked the city's early years. Within Huntington's diverse community, a majority of residents hailed from the North, and those people brought with them social and cultural practices. For Huntington, education became a focal point that residents worked diligently to implement, both to educate their children and to enrich the city. Reflecting its geography as well as the Northern and Southern origins of its population, Huntington constructed the economic, social and cultural foundations of a city that had elements of both geographic locations. Notwithstanding these efforts, the new city was not without its problems. The next chapter explores how early Huntingtonians dealt with crime, and how the *Huntington Independent's* coverage reflected the social structure of the new city.

CHAPTER 3

CRIME AND THE MEDIA: CRIMINAL ACTIVITY IN HUNTINGTON'S EARLY YEARS

“Drunken printers plenty. Slippery sidewalks. One hundred drunks. Steamboats behind time. Printers wanted. –Boarders plenty. House rents high. Election at hand. Cows run at large. Hogs impounded, and pigs running out. The cars are regular. The churches are moving.”¹⁶⁷

O.G. Chase, March 14, 1872

By 1872 the young city of Huntington had the necessary elements to forge a new urban center in Appalachia. From 1870 to the 1890s, Huntington can serve to illustrate two types of cities. Early in that period, crime manifested itself and evolved from petty illegal acts to murder and lynching as on the western frontier. As Huntington grew and dealt with crime, the city started to implement modern infrastructure, in the 1880s paving streets, adding gas street lights, electric railcars, modern sewage, and telephones, converting it from farmland to a modern city. This chapter focuses on the frontier-era manifestations of crime, how newspapers reported crime, and how residents reacted to criminal activities from 1871 to 1876. Most aspects of Huntington's early history of crime are largely forgotten or are reported inaccurately. This chapter aims to flesh out early patterns of crime while more accurately portraying the historical memory of crime in the city's history.

Historian Kristofer Allerfeldt makes an excellent point about the image and mythology of the West in American history: “When the history of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in America is written about, taught or in other ways examined, one of the elements which almost always forms at least a part of the study is the expansion of the nation into the

¹⁶⁷ O.G. Chase, “Brevities,” *Huntington Independent*, March 14, 1872.

untamed wilderness of the West.”¹⁶⁸ By linking expansion to the Western idea, Allerfeldt reveals a historiographic lacuna; new cities in the East are forgotten geographic history of America.

Huntington is one such city east of the Mississippi that paralleled the growth of western cities like Cheyenne and other western railroad towns. The history of crime in Huntington’s early years makes this comparison clear and helps fill in the history of new nineteenth-century small cities.



City Hall, circa 1870s. Photo courtesy of West Virginia & Regional History Center.

¹⁶⁸ Kristofer Allerfeldt, *Crime and The Rise of Modern America: A History From 1865-1941*, (New York: Routledge, 2011), 29.

MANIFESTATIONS OF URBAN CRIMINALITY

Huntington's location, founders, and the eclectic mix of people who migrated to the city make it a valuable case study. As people rushed out West following the Civil War to stake a claim under the Homestead Act, the developments of new cities such as Cheyenne, Wyoming, Bismarck, North Dakota, Dodge City, Kansas, and Arlington, Texas helped shape the American West. At the same time, established eastern cities expanded, and some new cities formed. Two notable new cities in the south-east developed around the same time as Huntington, both connected to the railroads. Birmingham, Alabama (1871), and Orlando, Florida (1875), both are major cities in the Deep South. Huntington's Mid-Atlantic location, on the other hand, provides a unique study of a new city, not north, south, or west. Its geographical location adds to the political, social, cultural, and economic factors that influenced the city's development.

People from all regions of the United States filtered into the young city of Huntington. As a community of relative strangers came together, crime wasted little time establishing itself, and gradually escalated from petty theft to murder and lynching. Historian Eric Monkkonen pointed out the possible instability derived from people rushing to an emerging city:

American cities had more unpredictable and volatile social bases than their Old World and colonial predecessors. By virtue of their rate of growth, to which was added an influx of immigrants from different nations, from different rural areas, and from different religious and economic backgrounds, U.S. cities simply did not have the personal networks that anchored more established communities.¹⁶⁹

Huntington certainly experienced volatility as people migrated from the north, south, and west bringing with them their social, cultural, religious, and political beliefs and behaviors. Regardless

¹⁶⁹ Eric H. Monkkonen, *America Becomes Urban: The Development of U.S. Cities & Towns, 1780-1980*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 91-92.

of the prospect of prosperity in Huntington, a small percentage of people were poor, and some were nearly destitute.¹⁷⁰

In the nineteenth century, Monkkonen writes, “most observers of city life believed in the existence of a “dangerous class,” a group of people responsible for but also suffering most from crime and disorder.”¹⁷¹ As more people migrated to Huntington, residents dealt with theft, public intoxication, and disorderly conduct. For the most part, the *Huntington Independent* conveyed that residents handled these petty criminal acts with adequate composure. At the same time, the newspaper seems not to have reported on all of the crime that occurred. Editor O.G. Chase felt reporting on the amount of crime taking place undermined the promotion of the city of Huntington.¹⁷²

It is therefore difficult to determine the frequency of crime in Huntington from 1870 to 1871 since Chase reported no crime statistics whatsoever in the first year of his newspaper.¹⁷³ The *Cabell County Press* (1869) and the *Argus* (1872), the other two local newspapers at the time, make it difficult to determine the rate of crime in the area as very few issues of either newspaper exist; this does not mean that crime did not occur. In Huntington’s rapid-growing first year, the *Huntington Independent* reported: “Disgraceful rows are getting quite common in and about the city limits. This will do now—[sic], but ere long Justice Johnson will take charge of

¹⁷⁰ No existing records outside of the *Huntington Independent* provide a breakdown of socioeconomic stratification in Huntington in the early years of the city’s history. However, the *Huntington Independent* discussed the nature of some residents’ economic plight from 1871 to 1873.

¹⁷¹ Monkkonen, *America Becomes Urban*, 227.

¹⁷² O.G. Chase, *Huntington Independent*, March 21, 1872. Chase noted in a short editorial about the frequency of letters the *Huntington Independent* received from all sections of the country inquiring about the business prospects of Huntington. To answer these letters Chase sent the writers an issue of the *Independent* that resulted in more subscriptions and a wider range of circulation.

¹⁷³ When O.G. Chase came to Guyandotte, West Virginia in 1870, he started the *Guyandotte Independent*; it was not called the *Huntington Independent* until August 31, 1871 on the one-year anniversary of the newspaper. Throughout that year, Chase did not report crime in his newspaper.

the roughs.”¹⁷⁴ In 1871, Huntington did not have a city-funded police department. Instead, its law enforcement reflected common rural nineteenth-century practice.

Justice Johnson served as the Justice of the Peace, fulfilling duties a newly settled area encountered such as settling general disputes. A.J. Enslow served as the local Squire, another office with similar duties. Rounding out the local law enforcement was Isaac Mitchel, often referred to as Ike, who was the city’s Marshal.¹⁷⁵ In Huntington’s early days, the city reflected traditional forms of passive policing common before the second wave of industrialization. Eric Monkkonen notes: “As nineteenth-century cities became more active agents, their formal organizations of social control reflected the larger process. By definition, the traditional constable and watch form of policing responded only after a crime had been committed.”¹⁷⁶ The Justice of the Peace and the Squire more than likely policed the city, whereas the Marshal was also required “to collect city taxes, fines, levies, and assessments.”¹⁷⁷ With a population of roughly 2,000 and only three law enforcement officers, it was only a matter of time before the media could no longer ignore the city’s rising criminal atmosphere.

After November 1871, the newspaper regularly reported crime. One of the first incidents of theft reported in the *Huntington Independent* noted that as residents W.J. Parsons and his wife were leaving for Vermont, their trunk was stolen from the wharf boat. Later that dark and stormy night, the trunk was found empty of its contents on the river bank, the stolen goods estimated at

¹⁷⁴ O.G. Chase, *Huntington Independent*, November 16, 1871. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2d ed., s.v. “Roughs.” Are persons “(typically a youth or a man) who is disreputable, disorderly, violent, or rowdy.”

¹⁷⁵ O.G. Chase, *Huntington Independent*, November 16, 1871. O.G. Chase, “City Council,” *Huntington Independent*, January 11, 1872. O.G. Chase, “Local Matters,” *Huntington Independent*, May 30, 1872.

¹⁷⁶ Monkkonen, *America Becomes Urban*, 101.

¹⁷⁷ *Acts of the Legislature of West Virginia at its Ninth Session*, (Charleston: H.S. Walker, Public Printer, 1871), 161-62.

\$300 in value. It did not take long for someone to act, although the responder was not a law enforcement officer.¹⁷⁸ Chase reported,

The old adage that a stern chase is a long one, was verified in Mr. Brooks' chase after the colored individual who stole Parsons' clothing. He started 6 hours behind, getting the trail at Four Pole, followed thence to a point above Guyandotte, from there to Barboursville, where the thief landed on one side of the ferry as B. [sic] made his appearance on the other; Brooks made his way to Barboursville, procured the assistance of a constable, overtook the thief and recovered all the property except a \$50 overcoat.¹⁷⁹

Indeed, the winter season seemed to spark theft in the city as wealthy residents were targeted.

The same week of the Parsons theft, Colonel George W. Gallup, a former Union officer from Kentucky, was in Huntington on business. Colonel Gallup, a Louisa, Kentucky lawyer, helped the building of the C & O Railroad, securing the contract to construct the Keys Creek Mining Railway, later known as the Big Sandy Railway.¹⁸⁰ Gallup was in Huntington supervising the filling of the railroad crossing at the old Holderby place in front of Marshall College for double railroad tracks leading to the riverbank.¹⁸¹ Later that week, according to the *Huntington Independent*,

A man calling himself George Webb, hired himself to Col. Gallup last Tuesday, and that night, he stole from his employer a pair of fine boots, a dark suit of clothes, a silver watch and some other goods, with \$15 in money and a Royal Arch G, gold. The said Webb has a large mole on one cheek, and if caught by the Col., he will give him one on the eyebrow.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ O.G. Chase, "Robbery," *Huntington Independent*, November 11, 1871.

¹⁷⁹ O.G. Chase, "Thief Captured," *Huntington Independent*, November 16, 1871.

¹⁸⁰ E. Polk Johnson, *A History of Kentucky and Kentuckians: The Leaders and Representative Men in Commerce, Industry and Modern Activities, Volume 3*, (Chicago—New York, Lewis Publishing Company, 1912), 1390-1391. Besides working for the C&O, Colonel Gallup practiced law in Catlettsburg, Kentucky and was eventually appointed Post Master General by President Hayes.

¹⁸¹ Chase, "Robbery," November 11, 1871.

¹⁸² O.G. Chase, "Theft," *Huntington Independent*, November 16, 1871. See Albert Gallatin Mackey, *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and Its Kindred Sciences, Comprising the Whole Range of Arts, Sciences and Literature as Connected with the Institution, Volume 2*, (New York: Masonic History Company, 1912), 645-647. A Royal Arch G varies depending on the year it was made, the region, and chapter of freemasons that produced them. Typically, it is a pendant made of gold with a triple tau cross within a triangle that is circumscribed by a triangle.

Subsequent issues of the *Huntington Independent* did not report whether the perpetrator Webb was apprehended. Crime in the city seemed to lull until the *Huntington Independent* reported on November 30 that, “Two Negroes had a little shooting scrape on 7th Street, last Friday.”¹⁸³ The newspaper offered no follow up reports of the shooting.

For the remainder of 1871, Huntington seemed to cool down, figuratively and literally.¹⁸⁴ The winter was cold, and brought a decent amount of snow; as for crime, it temporarily came to a stop. As the city prepared for the first municipal elections, residents, according to the *Huntington Independent*, illustrated much enthusiasm for them. With crime taking a temporary leave of absence, residents of Huntington seemed to carry on as life and business in a new urban area would have them do.

A CERTAIN CLASS OF INHABITANTS

As the spring of 1872 began, the first elected city government took over operations of the city. Without a uniformed police department or a sitting judge, criminal trials were conducted in the Mayor’s Court.¹⁸⁵ The city’s first trial marks an interesting point in the early criminal history of Huntington. The newspaper gave a brief report of a crime involving a resident, Mr. Whelan,

It is the doom of every community to have within its midst a certain class of inhabitants who can only be held in subjection by the stern majesty of the law. This deduction is drawn by what we witnessed last Monday morning, on being attracted to the Drug Store of Dr. Wall, along with a cast concourse of the curious, to see the trial of our first culprit.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ O.G. Chase, “Local Matters,” *Huntington Independent*, November 30, 1871.

¹⁸⁴ O.G. Chase, “The First Winter of Huntington,” *Huntington Independent*, December 14, 1871.

¹⁸⁵ In 1872, the county seat was in Barboursville, where a county judge presided. See Wallace, *Cabell County Annals and Families*, 316.

¹⁸⁶ O.G. Chase, “Mayor’s Court. —Recorder J.H. Oley Presiding,” *Huntington Independent*, January 18, 1872.

Mr. Whelan, it seems, was drunk and disorderly in public, and caused some commotion in the neighborhood of an affluent resident. Chase described the scene of the trial as it began:

There, in the back room, surrounded by all the panoply of power, sat our worthy Recorder, and, alas! There, too, trembling and abashed, stood the unfortunate victim of justice, and not appreciating to any great degree the notoriety of being the first in the city upon whom sentence was to be passed. The subject of so much curiosity—Whelan by name—on last Saturday night, laboring under a hallucination that the holidays were not yet of the “dead past,” indulged rather too freely in the contents of the “flowing bowl,” and indifferent to the peace of others, gave himself up to the bacchanalian sports, to the just detriment of the quiet slumbers of those of our citizens residing in the neighborhood of Mr. Pennybacker, to such an extent that the upholders of law had to interfere.¹⁸⁷

Chase’s language, subtly ascribing notoriety to Whelan for being the first culprit in the city, almost seemed as if he was trying to mythologize the criminal. Whelan pleaded guilty to his crime and was sentenced \$5; a light sentence since this was his first offense.¹⁸⁸

Mr. Whelan’s sentence may relate to an attempt to reform members of the dangerous class of people. Chase noted in the final statement of the trial coverage: “This being the first offence, and our Recorder having a kindly heart withal, merely mulcted [sic] the transgressor to the extent of \$5, and let him depart, feeling no longer one of those, (then) Recorder John H. Oley concluded his sentencing of Whelan by quoting Lord Byron’s poem *The Prisoner of Chillon*’ ‘To whom the goodly earth and air Are [sic] banned and barred forbidden fare.’”¹⁸⁹ Oley quoting this particular line might have been him foreshadowing Whelan’s fate if he did not change his ways. For the time being, crime reporting slowed down until March.

In March 1872, Huntington was still in the process of building itself; homes and businesses alike continued in their construction phases. The construction taking place in

¹⁸⁷ Chase, “Mayor’s Court.”

¹⁸⁸ According to U.S. inflation rates, \$5 in 1872 would be worth \$95.32 in 2017. Exchange rates come from the Bureau of Labor Statistic’s Annual Consumer Price Index (CPI), <https://www.bls.gov/cpi/>.

¹⁸⁹ Chase, “Mayor’s Court.”

Huntington attracted numerous carpenters, mechanics, and other laborers, perhaps a perfect environment for related fraud. The *Huntington Independent* noted,

As we run the *Independent* in the interest of the honest laboring men of our county, we find it to be our duty to warn others against a contracting carpenter named L.F. Whitaker, or Frank Whitaker, who came to Huntington a few months ago from the east, and after swindling carpenters, builders, mechanics, and manufacturers out from one to two thousand dollars he left here between two days, for some other point down the Ohio. We can cheerfully commend him as an unprincipled scoundrel and swindler. He has with him a woman whom he claims as second wife. Look out for him.¹⁹⁰

Chase published offenders' names when available, though some criminal behavior did not receive the same attention, such as two men beating each other severely at a dogfight.¹⁹¹ A class-based distinction emerged regarding people who committed crimes, and if affluent people were affected by criminals' behaviors, Chase's depth of crime reporting increased. From the end of March to the end of May, crime reporting once again slowed down. Huntington had witnessed its first criminal trial in January; in May, the city experienced its first civil trial, temporarily breaking the pattern of ordinary crimes.

THE FIRST JURY TRIAL IN HUNTINGTON

William Hope Harvey, often called "Coin" Harvey later in his life for promoting free silver and running for president in 1932, came to Huntington in April 1872 to practice law.¹⁹² Harvey set up his law office in the Holderby building on Seventh Street and was a participant in the first jury trial held in Huntington, the case of Mrs. Repas vs. Phillip O'Riley. Repas sued O'Riley, who ran a business selling oil cloths, but apparently was not paying his boarding fees

¹⁹⁰ O.G. Chase, "A Swindler," *Huntington Independent*, March 21, 1872.

¹⁹¹ O.G. Chase, "Local Matters," *Huntington Independent*, March 21, 1872.

¹⁹² O.G. Chase, "Local Matters," *Huntington Independent*, April 25, 1872. For more information on William H. Harvey, see William H. Harvey, *Coin's Financial School*, ed., and introduction. Richard Hofstadter (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963). See Donald W. Whisenhunt, *Utopian Movements and Ideas of the Great Depression: Dreamers, Believers, and Madmen*, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013), 167. Harvey formed the Liberty Party in 1932 and ran for president.

and Repas, the landlord, took the sum of \$42 from O’Riley at the express office.¹⁹³ The

Huntington Independent briefly described the details of the civil suit and proceeded to give greater attention to the lawyers, especially the young Harvey:

W.H. Harvey a mere youth appeared for the plaintiff, and E. Gibson of Virginia, an old and experienced attorney for the defendant—whereupon the third party appeared and claimed the goods attached to be his, sustaining his claim by his own evidence and that of Phillip O’Riley, but the jury could not see it in that light.—The most striking features in the case was manifest by the contrast in the two attorneys, one old, dignified and sarcastic, the other young, shrewd and courteous, winning his suit by superiority of modern power, rarely manifest in so young a lawyer. The suit attracted unusual attention and W.H. Harvey won for himself lasting confidence in the minds of the hundreds who witnessed his ability and respect in the case.¹⁹⁴

Chase does not provide any other information about the case, nor does he explain why the civil suit “attracted unusual attention.” It is hard to determine why the case attracted many people.

More likely, the trial’s notoriety derived from a combination of factors. First, its status as the city’s first jury trial. Second, William H. Harvey was one of the youngest people to pass the state bar in West Virginia and a newcomer to the city. Last, and most important, a businesswoman bringing suit against a man during a period of increased concern with women’s constitutional rights probably generated much discourse in the young city.¹⁹⁵ Although the editor noted that the trial “attracted unusual attention,” the paper paid little additional attention to the

¹⁹³ O.G. Chase, *Huntington Independent*, May 02, 1872.

¹⁹⁴ O.G. Chase, *Huntington Independent*, May 02, 1872.

¹⁹⁵ Joan Hoff-Wilson, *Law, Gender, and Injustice: A Legal History of U.S. Women*, (New York: NYU Press, 1994), 117. Hoff-Wilson described women’s legal status through four stages of constitutional representation. The ending of what Hoff-Wilson refers to as constitutional neglect (1787-1872) and the beginning of constitutional discrimination (1872-1908) provides some understanding into the legal status of women at the time of the trial in Huntington. The ending of constitutional neglect ushered in the period of constitutional discrimination, wherein “the legal discourse relating to women changed dramatically in response to their demands based on a heightened sense of rights consciousness.” Hoff-Wilson emphasizes the importance of the early 1870s: “For the first time beginning in the early 1870s, women systematically tried to obtain constitutional equality and full citizenship from the courts by challenging the remaining common-law restrictions on them. As they struggled to gain equal rights during this period, women, on the whole, made small inroads concerning property rights and wages, but still lacked full citizenship rights as granted to men.

first case. Whatever his motives in this coverage was, Chase's reporting of crime continued as the summer heated up.

SUMMERTIME AND THE LIVING AIN'T EASY

As the first civil suit ended in Huntington, ordinary crime reporting resumed. The first reported incidence of crime from the summer of 1872 illustrates characteristics of Huntington's social and cultural norms, as well as how early law enforcement made decisions about handling crime. In late May 1872, the *Huntington Independent* reported in a few sentences about public violence: "Some white and black negroes came near having a knock down near the Post Office the other morning. Had it not been for the timely interference of Justice Enslow, knives and rocks would have come into requisition."¹⁹⁶ The fact that a public fight almost occurred is not particularly a major concern; it is the language used by the editor with the phrase "white negro" and its meaning that illustrates a peculiar point.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the term white-negro has two definitions with specific differences, both applying to separate incidents in Huntington. For the situation mentioned above, the term white negro means: "a white person who is a member of a disdained underclass."¹⁹⁷ Historian Jonathan Glickstein examined the usage of white negro and how it applied to Irish immigrants, noting that by labeling the Irish as white negroes, nineteenth-century American capitalists illustrated in a clear and effective manner their exploitive possibilities.¹⁹⁸ As for the public brawl that almost happened, the newspaper provided no further details about the people involved or stated whether Justice Enslow arrested anyone. How Enslow handled the

¹⁹⁶ O.G. Chase, "Local Matters," *Huntington Independent*, May 30, 1872.

¹⁹⁷ White-negro: A white person likened to or treated like a black slave. Later also: a white person who is a member of a disdained underclass. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2d ed., s.v. "white negro."

¹⁹⁸ Jonathan A. Glickstein, *Concepts of Free Labor in Antebellum America*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), 340-341.

situation may reflect what Mitchel P. Roth, a criminal justice historian, refers to as the double standards of society during the Victorian-era:

According to this Victorian compromise, gambling, prostitution, and other related forms of vice and crime were tolerated under the assumption that there was little that could be officially done to eradicate them. Historian Lawrence Friedman describes this compromise as “a muddled but powerful theory of social control, in which private sins could be tolerated in the “dark corners and back alleys” as long as public order was not compromised.”¹⁹⁹

The “Victorian compromise” theory may help explain the relative lack of newspaper coverage of crimes in the city.

The influx of immigration, urbanization, increased child labor demands, the rise of illegitimate births, and the hundreds of thousands of deaths from the Civil War significantly contributed to the rise of juvenile crime.²⁰⁰ Historian James Marten discussed how the Civil War dramatically changed the lives of thousands of children left fatherless and put in orphanages.²⁰¹ Huntington’s juvenile crime elicited a noticeably different response from the community, compared to adult criminals. In early June 1872, the *Huntington Independent* made its first report about juvenile crime in Huntington, demonstrating a paternalistic response to juvenile delinquency:

Juvenile thieves have been engaged in till tapping hereabouts, and we are requested to keep it still, but we will publish dates and names, unless these rascals are restrained from further mischief in that line. Merchants are requested to watch their money drawers when these boys are about. Every honest boy can and will have honest employment to keep them out of mischief.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ Mitchel P. Roth, *Crime and Punishment: A History of the Criminal Justice System*, (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2010), 168.

²⁰⁰ See Shahid M. Shahidullah, *Crime Policy in America: Laws, Institutions, and Programs*, (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: UPA Press, 2015), 171-176.

²⁰¹ James Marten, *The Children’s Civil War*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 211-217.

²⁰² O.G. Chase, *Huntington Independent*, June 06, 1872.

Though cities like Boston implemented youth reform centers as early as the 1820s, Huntington lacked any form of youth reform programs. Scrutiny of the *Huntington Independent* from 1871 to 1873 reveals very little reporting on juvenile crime in the city.²⁰³

At this juncture in the city's history, local law enforcement appeared not to arrest criminals at a high frequency since most crimes in the city revolved around vice and fighting in public. Since juvenile crime was only reported in the *Huntington Independent* one time, it is probable the occurrence of juvenile crime was much lower than adult crimes. It may also be that O.G. Chase simply decided against reporting juvenile crime. Heading into July, crime in the city included a mixture of vice, breaking-and-entering, and tax scams, while the impending Fourth of July created fears of sectional violence.

SHAMEFUL CONDUCT, INDEED

Despite the generally benign approach to vice crimes in Huntington, an incident in the second week of June 1872 sparked a strong response, not witnessed in the city at this time:

About 11 o'clock last night some unknown drunken rowdies, after passing up and down 3d Avenue several times, finally completed their malice and meanness by throwing a bottle of whiskey through Dr. Campbell's window. Smashing the bottle and glass against the wall in the bedroom, where Mrs. Campbell lay sick with fever. Such rowdyism [sic] should be broken up or Huntington will feel it.²⁰⁴

This incident, involving Mrs. Campbell, the wife of a doctor, probably added to the emerging sense of urgency regarding crime in Huntington because an affluent resident was a victim of crime. The specific target of this crime prompted a call for the vigilance of residents. Chase wrote: "We intend to make inquiries into those things which concern this place, that seem wrong

²⁰³ It is hard to determine how Huntingtonians dealt with juvenile crime; the under-reporting from the *Huntington Independent* makes the frequency of juvenile crime nearly impossible to verify.

²⁰⁴ O.G. Chase, "Shameful Conduct," *Huntington Independent*, June 13, 1872.

and publish them, for the benefit of the citizens, that they seeing the wrong, will take measures to dispense with all such extravagancies, and trust that those who wish to keep within the law will sustain us.”²⁰⁵ The call to residents to watch out for criminal activities reflected one of the first statutes the city council passed which mandated, “that a resident must assist an officer of the law in need of help while apprehending a criminal or face charges themselves.”²⁰⁶ Even after the city chose its first municipal officials, no official police department existed, nor was one authorized. In its absence, the mayor and city council relied on residents to aid the Marshal, Justice of the Peace, and the Squire when necessary. As part of his responsibilities, the mayor had the right to make arrests, but only within city limits.²⁰⁷ Not helping an officer of the law resulted in a \$5 fine or an unspecified amount of time in jail.

Throughout 1872, the *Huntington Independent* (Republican) engaged in a quarrel with the *Argus* (Democrat), the city’s third newspaper. The two newspapers did not get off to a cordial start. Chase reported that the *Argus* stated: “it is announced as a permanent institution, one that will be here when the *Independent* is defunct and its editor on the wing.”²⁰⁸ Chase reported on the *Argus*’ editor’s political disposition:

The most redeeming feature our competitor boasts of, is that he was born on the sacred soil of Virginia, is and always has been a true Democrat, opposed to new departures, and opposed to surrendering one jot of tittle to the republicans. –His hatred against the northern vim in building railroads at the expense of the public domain, is only excelled by his fear of their superiority of money and brains.²⁰⁹

It was not uncommon for nineteenth-century newspapers to compete in the same locality. Nor was it rare that newspapers represented different political parties, or insulted one another,

²⁰⁵ O.G. Chase, *Huntington Independent*, June 13, 1872.

²⁰⁶ *City Charter of Huntington, 1870 to 1875*, 3. Charter housed at City Hall, Huntington, West Virginia.

²⁰⁷ *Acts of the Legislature of West Virginia at its Ninth Session*, (Charleston: H. S. Walker, Public Printer, 1871), 161-162.

²⁰⁸ O.G. Chase, “The Argus,” *Huntington Independent*, May 30, 1872.

²⁰⁹ Chase, “The Argus.”

especially during the Reconstruction era. The arguments between the *Huntington Independent* and the *Argus* escalated beyond insults in the editorial columns.

It did not take long after the *Argus* was in print before tensions between the two newspapers reflected their dislike for one another. Although it was Chase who was targeted, he reported:

A sneak named Berry, who had previously been led out of our house, drunk, while we were at church last Sunday evening entered our office through a back window, and after plundering to his satisfaction, retired in the same way. This man claims a one-third interest in the *Argus* office, and came here to run a *truthful* newspaper. Verily, friend Pike has been caught in bad company.²¹⁰

Within one week of breaking into Chase's house, Berry Pike broke into Chase's *Independent* office while he was at church. No further mention of how law enforcement dealt with the situation appeared in subsequent issues of the *Huntington Independent*. Tensions continued between the two politically different newspapers while no other accounts of breaking-and-entering occurred. As Huntington prepared for the Fourth of July, fears, sectional tensions, and community reactions dominated public discourse.

RISING TENSIONS

As rowdiness and public intoxication increased, residents took notice of the shifting dynamics in the city, and from this juncture, Huntingtonians debated how to deal with vice. Alcohol became the focus of discourse regarding whether businesses should close on the Sabbath or not. The *Independent* stated:

The wine, beer and whiskey saloons should be kept closed, not only the front doors, but the sneaking, cowardly, rear entrances, should be closed at 12 o'clock Saturday night and

²¹⁰ O.G. Chase, "High Minded," *Huntington Independent*, June 27, 1872. In the June 13, 1872 issue of the *Independent*, Chase referred to Samuel Pike as the editor of the *Argus*; it is uncertain if "Berry Pike" is Samuel Pike or relative, possibly a brother. See O.G. Chase, "The "truthful" democratic Argus Says," *Huntington Independent*, June 13, 1872.

remain quiet until Monday morning. It is very annoying to see men doing anything that their own acts prove they are ashamed of. We are authorized by the city authorities to warn some of our Sabbath breakers against their unholy and unlawful back door trading.²¹¹

Bars serving residents in back alleys had been “hidden vice.” As long as vice was kept in the dark corners of the city, and out of view of respectable people, it was tolerated. However, Chase’s article indicates that some in Huntington had reached their limits with drunkenness. The rising consumption of alcohol and increased gambling led religious and fraternal organizations to respond. The *Independent* noted: “Ignorance, drunkenness and gambling are becoming a stench in the nostrils of our better citizens.”²¹² The “better citizens,” were those whose contributions to the growing economy of Huntington justified the increased attention to crime that affected them. As tensions brewed in the city between classes, issues of race percolated to the surface as well.

On Monday, July 01, 1872, violence reflected the rising fears of sectional conflict leading up to the Fourth of July. The riot that occurred exhibited many of the social, cultural, and racial dynamics of the city:

Monday evening, 3rd Avenue was the scene of excitement beyond measure for such hot weather. It seems a colored man named Dandridge Hopkins had hired a horse from Thomas McFarland’s livery stable, and lost the saddle blanket. Not having the ready cash to pay for the blanket, a row was raised between the negro of the first part, and Patrick O’Brien and Thomas McFarland of the second part. A few blows caused the negro to retreat from the stable up 9th Street to 3rd Avenue, where he was over-taken by his assailants and another hand to hand fight occurred. But the negro was soon reinforced by all the white men and black negroes in town; but O’Brien and McFarland were also reinforced by all the *white negroes*, which offered an excellent chance to try the muscle between the two contending elements; but just here marshal Mitchel interfered, arrested McFarland, caused O’Brien to run away, and the crowd to disperse. The trial will come off today.²¹³

²¹¹ O.G. Chase, *Huntington Independent*, May 16, 1872.

²¹² O.G. Chase, *Huntington Independent*, May 23, 1872.

²¹³ O.G. Chase, “Riot,” *Huntington Independent*, July 04, 1872.

As the fight broke out, two distinct elements further escalated the event. First, Hopkins was reinforced, as Chase stated by all the “white men and black negroes,” in town. Secondly, McFarland and O’Brien were reinforced, as Chase noted by “*white negroes*,” probably indicated these men were Irish. This incident can provide insight into some of the intricate aspects of Huntington’s racial dynamics.

In the situation that caused the riot, “white negro” was used to describe the men who came to the aid of McFarland and O’Brien. So, who were the white negroes that came to McFarland and O’Brien’s aid during the fight? Chase made a noteworthy point concerning the people who came to the aid of Hopkins, noting they were “white men,” not italicized, like white negroes; but who were these “white men?” Many northerners migrated to Huntington and brought with them Republican principles. Historian Nicholas Guyatt also points out that in the aftermath of the Civil War, northerners struggled with the concept of living equally among African Americans, and helped to promote the idea of separate but equal.²¹⁴ Were these white men affluent businessmen, railroad workers, or other laborers? Unfortunately, no other accounts of this incident exist to explain the situation further. Nevertheless, the phrases that Chase used to describe two groups of white people correlated to how nineteenth-century Americans viewed the Irish as an underclass that displayed animosity towards African Americans. As for the other white men, they may have represented northerners who supported African Americans during Reconstruction.

The other interesting element in the racially-charged fight is that Marshal Mitchel arrested McFarland, while O’Brien escaped. Chase concluded the article by stating a court

²¹⁴ Nicholas Guyatt, *Bind Us Apart: How Enlightened Americans Invented Racial Segregation*, (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2016), 11-12.

hearing took place the same day as the fight. A trial taking place the same day as a crime was committed in Huntington had not previously happened, let alone reported on by the newspaper, and subsequent issues of the *Independent* did not further report about a trial or McFarland's penalty if any. Notably, Huntington's law enforcement handled this situation differently than previous incidents of public violence by policing the incident as it happened. Chase, as well, continued his under-reporting of crime and had a penchant for not following up on criminal activities in the city. Huntington's fear of conflict due to the Fourth of July derived from the sense of sectional tension relating to Union vs. Confederate, brother against brother, political affiliation, and patriotism.

WE ARE ALL AMERICANS HERE

Leading up to the Fourth of July, *Independent* articles articulated fears highlighted the anxiety brought on by the holiday among former Confederates and Unionists. The socioeconomic mixture of people indulging in excessive vice might have caused some social and cultural strife as well. As the Fourth of July neared, and vice increased in the city, more than likely old feelings regarding the Civil War reared within the community. The combination of alcohol, gambling, and politically charged sectional differences created the potential for a dangerous atmosphere.

The looming threats of violence lingered in the minds of residents, and editorials in the *Huntington Independent* reinforced these fears. The *Independent* illustrated some of the sectional conflicts that existed in the city leading up to the Fourth of July. On July 2nd, the editor stated:

Two days more and we have the first Fourth of July in Huntington. We have often heard it repeated that the flag of our country cannot, and shall not wave in this town. We are sure this spirit breathes forth the meanest elements of the dirty scum of defunct fogyism. It is now proposed that all respectable citizens irrespective of party bias, will meet at the

foot of 9th Street next Thursday morning and take a hand in raising to public view the torn remains of the flag, which some cowardly sneak attempted to destroy a few weeks ago.²¹⁵

Confederate sympathy might have been stronger than Chase purported at this point in the city's short history. Chase occasionally wrote that sectional conflict was minimal at best and that commerce stood above sectional differences. People arguing that the U.S. flag could not fly in the city, and attempted theft of the flag shows the existence of potent sectional differences. The impending Fourth of July combined with the increase of alcohol consumption and gambling might have amplified these sentiments.

The following day, July 3rd, a small group of residents gathered in hopes of raising a flagpole for the Fourth of July, and Chase reported the sentiments of the people involved: "An effort was made yesterday to stir up patriotism enough to hoist a Fourth of July pole tomorrow. The meeting last night was a slim affair, yet it had some redeeming features. It was not a party meeting but manifested a feeling of reconciliation from the few present, rarely witnessed up to now at such occasions."²¹⁶ In response to Chase's article, W.S. Downer, a former Confederate Staff Officer to Robert E. Lee, wrote: "I attended at the place appointed, but found to my regret that there were but few there of any class; I think, however, this was caused more by ignorance of the appointment than want of interest."²¹⁷

Downer believed the meeting was admirable and that all citizens regardless of class, creed, or political affiliation should unite. He went on to say: "I have consulted with several gentlemen who, like myself, were officers or soldiers in the Confederate army, and we will do all

²¹⁵ O.G. Chase, "Fourth of July," *Huntington Independent*, July 04, 1872. Chase did not report in previous issues of the *Independent* about someone attempting to destroy the American Flag.

²¹⁶ O.G. Chase, *Huntington Independent*, July 04, 1872.

²¹⁷ O.G. Chase, "Home Correspondence," *Huntington Independent*, July 04, 1872. The article "Home Correspondence" is a letter written by D.S. Downer.

in our power to promote the matter.”²¹⁸ Downer showed support for the holiday and the American flag while outlining the problems that sectional conflict could create. “There can certainly be no more unwise or ruinous policy in our young city, than one that would foster or keep alive sectional prejudices; we are citizens of one country.”²¹⁹ Here, Downer emphasized that the Fourth of July was a national holiday that belonged as much to the Southerner as it did the Northerner.

Downer not only promoted reconciliation but condemned people who perpetuated sectional conflict. The abuse of the American flag seemed to spark his outrage, though, as Downer stated: “The act of mutilating the flag, which was committed some time ago, was certainly condemned by every Southern and Northern man whose opinion is worthy of respect; it was wanton outrage, committed under cover of midnight darkness, which could be productive of nothing but evil.”²²⁰ In his conclusion, Downer once more specifically spoke about the dangers of sectional conflict and how such sentiments were detrimental to Huntington’s economy and social structures. “We are one people, and the welfare of the city is bound upon preserving ourselves from sectional prejudices of all kinds and united action in behalf of loyalty, law, and order.”²²¹ Being a migrant resident of Huntington in those first years instilled a sense of duty and loyalty in some people. Commerce was promoted above all else in the city; prosperity and peaceful living during the chaos of Reconstruction also helped nurture a sense of loyalty to the city. Urged to keep in mind the reconciliatory attitudes of prominent citizens, whether former Union or Confederate, residents commenced with Fourth of July festivities.

²¹⁸ Chase, “Home Correspondence.”

²¹⁹ Chase, “Home Correspondence.”

²²⁰ Chase, “Home Correspondence.”

²²¹ Chase, “Home Correspondence.”

The following week the *Huntington Independent* ran an article taken from the *Cabell County Press* that provided imagery of the city's first Fourth of July celebration: "The first Fourth of July in Huntington was converted into a political class-meeting."²²² Captain H.C. Parsons, a former Union officer, began the ceremony and received loud cheers from the crowd. Then, Major W.S. Downer spoke, and he reinforced the purpose of so many people coming to Huntington. Likewise, Downer's patriotic sentiment and loyalty to the Union flag was reinforced by William Martin, Captain T.J. Burke, and Captain Trice, all former officers of the Confederacy. From this juncture, Downer and the three former Confederate officers "reminded us of the fact that we were here to work, to build a city that political strife should not enter into our new town."²²³ Commerce, in other words, should push out sectional feeling.

Downer's remarks were met with cheers of amen from, as the newspaper quoted, "the most utter radicals and lifelong Democrats" in the city.²²⁴ Describing the celebration as a "political-class meeting," further illustrates some Republican and Democratic willingness to put aside their political and cultural differences for the sake of commerce. The newspaper emphasized the peaceable attitude that pervaded the Independence Day celebrations: "The tomahawk was buried and the first 4th of July in Huntington will long be remembered as a day of reconciliation and brotherly love."²²⁵

If the *Independent* covered the holiday with themes of reconciliation, the *Courier*, a Charleston, West Virginia newspaper, to the contrary reported on racial conflict in Huntington. The *Independent* reported that: "The *Courier* of the 4th says, "there was a little breeze stirred up

²²² From the *Cabell County Daily Press*, "Fourth of July," *Huntington Independent*, July 11, 1872.

²²³ "Fourth of July."

²²⁴ "Fourth of July."

²²⁵ "Fourth of July."

here yesterday, by two young gentlemen trying to chastise an impudent negro.”²²⁶ The *Independent* provided details regarding the incident.

The interested limb [sic] who sent that information to the *Courier*, was surprised to hear Squire Enslow rule the young *gentlemen* to security for their appearance to answer in the Circuit Court for an assault and battery. The radicals were not the only ones to defend the negro boy against the cowardly assault, but the most respectable democrats also condemned the attack, and were ready to fight in favor of the imposed upon negro. Let us hear from you again Mr. “Hard Shell,” and we will give your name square out.²²⁷

The assault of an African-American child, indeed, angered residents of Huntington, Republican and Democrat alike; law enforcement responded by arresting the perpetrators and arraigning them in court. Like most of Chase’s crime reports, he did not follow up on the trial. This situation may have reflected the sentiments of Huntington residents concerning the racial atmosphere in the city; despite the existence of racial tensions, the welfare of a child of whatever race apparently deeply concerned Huntingtonians.

WHEN THE CIRCUS CAME TO TOWN

The Rosston & Co. circus listed in the July 11, 1872 issue of the *Huntington Independent* was the Rosston, Springer and Henderson’s Circus which traveled the east coast and the Ohio Valley.²²⁸ The Rosston circus traveled through Ohio during June 1872, and the *New York Clipper* reported

John Bates, an attach of Rosston, Springer and Henderson’s Circus, was arrested in Cincinnati, O., on the 10th, when lying in the hospital, on a charge of murder. It appears that last month, while the show was exhibiting at Carrollton, O., a man intruding upon the show was beaten by some of the employees and died of his injuries. The authorities of the town charged the affair upon Bates and Tom Rivers. Bates was sent to Carrollton,

²²⁶ O.G. Chase, “Local Matters,” *Huntington Independent*, July 11, 1872.

²²⁷ “Local Matters.”

²²⁸ See William Lawrence Slout, *Olympians of the Sawdust Circle: A Biographical Dictionary of the Nineteenth Century American Circus*, (Rockville: Wildside Press, LLC., 1998), pp. 77-105.

although according to his own statement, he was not within a mile of the affray when it occurred. So wrote our correspondent on June 14.²²⁹

It is hard to say whether or not people in Huntington knew about the Cincinnati murder that involved employees of the Rosston & Co. circus; fears of increased criminal activity in the city due to the circus were commonplace. When the circus came to town, in addition to the opportunities for familial and community bonding, people typically indulged in vice.

During the summer of 1872, although some comical acts of mischief occurred, the city prepared to deal with the circus visit. City council authorized Marshal Mitchel to deputize up to ten men in anticipation of illicit activities of residents and circus workers alike.²³⁰ Fears of the circus coming to town were not uncommon in the nineteenth and early twentieth-century American locales. Historian Janet M. Davis discussed the potential range of problems towns dealt with when the circus arrived: “Although Circus Day was a carnivalesque occasion for community consolidation, it was also, paradoxically, a time for community fragmentation. Established bonds of intimacy within watchful communities temporarily dissolved into anonymity, which gave people license to engage in illicit activities.”²³¹ Davis contends that people gladly indulged in vice when the circus came to town, which often resulted in residents acting outside of their typical moral compass.

The weekend following the Fourth of July, the circus came to Huntington, and as Marshal Mitchel predicted, residents indulged in a vice. Walter Burgess, a resident of Huntington, experienced firsthand the rowdiness in the city caused by the circus as reported in the *Independent*: “Some of the drunken attaches of the circus made an unprovoked assault upon

²²⁹ *New York Clipper*, June 22, 1872.

²³⁰ O.G. Chase, “City Council Minutes,” *Huntington Independent*, July 11, 1872.

²³¹ Janet M. Davis, *The Circus Age: Culture and Society under the American Big Top*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 29.

Walter Burgess of this place Sunday night by great exertion—Mr. B shielded himself from them, without serious injury. One of the roughs was arrested and locked up, but this morning it turns out that the guilty partly [sic] looked like him, but it was not him, and he went away clear.”²³² The only other crime that resulted from the circus involved a local man, James Tanner, and a circus worker. The *Independent* noted, “James Tanner, (colored) was arrested last Sunday, sent to jail and tried Monday, for stealing money from a street trickster, but for want of testimony he was acquitted before A.J. Enslow, esq.”²³³ Ordinarily, if an African American man robbed an average white man in nineteenth-century America, he would certainly be punished for the crime. However, since no one was willing to testify, and the victim was a criminal himself, Squire Enslow acquitted Tanner.

Aside from the circus and other such events, for the next few years crime in Huntington followed familiar trends: petty nuisances of public intoxication, the occasional con man, and public violence. Likewise, the *Huntington Independent* continued to handle crime reporting in the same fashion, with few articles that addressed criminal activity in the city. Again, this was a result of how editor Chase used the *Independent* to boost the city of Huntington. However, by 1875, Huntington experienced its first bank robbery, supposedly from an infamous gang, and by 1876 the city dealt with a string of murders and two lynchings.

HIGHWAYMEN, THE LAW, AND LYNCHING

1875 marked a turning point in the city’s criminal history, noted in local history by the first bank robbery in Huntington, purportedly carried out by the famous James-Younger Gang.²³⁴

²³² O.G. Chase, “Local Matters,” *Huntington Independent*, July 11, 1872.

²³³ O.G. Chase, *Huntington Independent*, July 18, 1872.

²³⁴ Wallace, *Cabell County Annals and Families*, 180-182.

Although evidence strongly suggests the famous bank robbers were not responsible for the crime, this idea nonetheless persists through Huntington's history. The following year West Virginia experienced a series of lynchings that garnered national attention.²³⁵ If the popular memory of the bank robbery persists in Huntington, the lynchings that occurred in the city are mistold and largely forgotten. One lynching, the case of Mort Lee, is inaccurately recorded as taking place in Huntington, while another, the lynching of Sam Camden, is completely overlooked.

On September 06, 1875, Huntington's first bank robbery happened. The James-Younger gang was eventually accused by some, because the method used by the bandits resembled that exercised in the gang's much-publicized robberies, and reported to have stolen \$7,000 to \$13,000 by newspapers. The James-Younger gang utilized daylight, fast horses, and a quick confrontation with pistols to overwhelm bank employees during their robberies. Local historian James Casto's brief article about the robbery, "Huntington Bank Robbed," provides a short history of the James-Younger gang and a description of the robbery. While not directly saying the infamous gang perpetrated the crime, he noted: "Maybe it was the James-Younger gang and maybe not, but the Huntington robbery clearly fit their pattern."²³⁶ As newspapers covered the Huntington Bank robbery, it did not take long before the famous gang of outlaws emerged as the prime suspects.

Without having actual Huntington newspapers from September 1875, it is hard to pinpoint the origins of the belief that the James-Younger gang was responsible for the bank

²³⁵ From 1875 to 1876, six lynchings from Charleston, Martinsburg to Huntington occurred; these lynchings branded West Virginia as a lawless state in the east that paralleled the western frontier. See "West Virginia Justice, The Sixth Lynching Affair Since January," *Wheeling Intelligencer*, August 23, 1876.

²³⁶ James E. Casto, "Huntington Bank Robbed," *Wonderful West Virginia Magazine*, Issue 01, 2014, 5.

robbery. Nevertheless, many papers from other states covered the story, as with most robberies committed, or supposedly committed, by the famous outlaws. One of the earliest reports of the robbery came from the *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer* which focused on the response of Huntingtonians to the bandits' getaway. It offered this about the perpetrators: "From the information gathered, it is probable that two of them are the famous Underwoods, for whom the State of Kentucky offers \$2,000, dead or alive."²³⁷ The newspaper did not mention the James-Younger gang.

The *Intelligencer* article concluded by comparing Huntington to the West: "If Kansas or the Territories wish to head the list of daring crimes, they will have to try a new hand; we consider Huntington several years ahead. Who and what next?"²³⁸ The same day, the *Alexandria Gazette & Virginia Advertiser* ran a short article about the robbery again without mentioning possible suspects. This article lists \$13,000 as the amount the robbers stole. It is possible this is where differing accounts conceivably originated regarding the amount of money reportedly stolen.²³⁹ Descriptions of the robbery continued to evolve, and different newspapers provided varying details, such as the Charles Town, West Virginia *Spirit of Jefferson* which stated: "The robbers succeeded in getting possession, with which they decamped. A confederate had horses in waiting. An alarm was instantly given, and citizens and police started in pursuit, but failed to overtake the robbers, all of whom escaped."²⁴⁰

²³⁷ "Citizens of Huntington in Pursuit of the Daring Bank Robbers," *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, September 09, 1875.

²³⁸ "Citizens of Huntington."

²³⁹ "Bank Robbery," *Alexandria Gazette & Virginia Advertiser*, September 09, 1875.

²⁴⁰ "Bold Robbery of A Bank," Charles Town, West Virginia, *Spirit of Jefferson*, September 14, 1875.

Newspapers provided different accounts of the money stolen from the Huntington Bank, with no physical description of the robbers. However, this soon changed. An article from a Washington D.C. newspaper stated:

A dispatch to the Louisville detectives reports the wounding and capture of one of the men who recently robbed the Huntington (W.Va.) Bank in broad daylight of \$10,000. The capture was made at Pine Hill, Ky., by two residents named Dillon during Tuesday night. It seems the four men who committed the robbery in Huntington were pursued into Kentucky. The news of their flight being telegraphed ahead of them every day with instructions to effect their capture. On Tuesday word was received at Pine Hill that four robbers, supposed to belong to the James-Younger band were near that place.²⁴¹

The article printed in the *Evening Star* is the first newspaper that suggests members of James-Younger gang committed the Huntington Bank heist. The article concluded by stating that one of the four men was shot while the other three escaped, and the man who died was believed to be Cole Younger.²⁴² Clearly this was a case of mistaken identity, as Younger died in 1916, at the age of 72, in Lee's Summit, Missouri.²⁴³

An article from the Leavenworth, Kansas *Weekly Times* provided new details about the bank robbery and disputed claims of other newspapers regarding the robbery. As reports of the dead bank robber spread across the country, the famous detective Delos Thurman "Yankee" Bligh contended the dead criminal was indeed Jesse James.²⁴⁴ However, the paper presented different evidence:

The Louisville *Courier-Journal* still hugs Detective Bligh's delusion, that the dead bank robber was Jesse James. The identity of the dead man as Thompson McDaniels was first made known in the St. Louis *Times*, and the Associated Press dispatches of yesterday confirmed the statement, on the very evidence which Detective Bligh forwarded to Kansas City. With reference to the *Times* special, it need only be said that the *Times*

²⁴¹ "The West Virginia Bank Robbery," *Evening Star*, September 16, 1875.

²⁴² "West Virginia Bank Robbery."

²⁴³ Marley Brant and Cole Younger, *The Story of Cole Younger*, (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2014), xviii.

²⁴⁴ "Too Late: A Louisville Detective's Attempt to Discredit the Death of McDaniels," *Leavenworth Weekly Times*, September 30, 1875.

correspondent did visit Pine Hill, saw McDaniels and fully identified him. After endeavoring some inaccuracies in the *Times* special, the *Courier-Journal* says. —The correspondent does not think that either the James or Younger brothers were in the Huntington bank robbery, and portends that he recognized the dead man as Thompson, alias “Charley” McDaniels a noted desperado.²⁴⁵

The *Weekly Times* described Thompson McDaniels and believed he was not the dead bank robber who by their account was a dark-complexioned, short man. The dead bank robber’s skin tone and height did not match the six-foot tall and light-skinned McDaniels.

The *Weekly Times* also printed an article from the *Nashville American* that included a letter, supposedly written by Jesse James, claiming he did not rob the Huntington Bank. The letter from Jesse James was not the first he had sent to newspapers claiming innocence of a crime: “James was fond of writing letters to newspapers denying involvement in this or that crime.”²⁴⁶ The *Weekly Times* questioned the authenticity of the letter: “Coming as it does, from St. Louis, the authorship looks rather suspicious. The letter is entirely different in phraseology, and spelling from any of Jesse James’ former letters, the grammatical construction and spelling being generally good, although there is an attempt at poor formation of sentences, while all of his former letters were illy constructed and very badly spelled.”²⁴⁷ Likewise, historian William A. Settle noted that “whether Jesse wrote any of the letters is not known.”²⁴⁸

The supposed James letter laid out his defense, for himself and Cole Younger, who at the time, was reported as not being friends.

To the Editor of the *American*. In a previous communication I spoke of how the Jameses [sic] and Youngers had been lied on by Bligh, the incompetent detective of Louisville,

²⁴⁵ “Too Late.”

²⁴⁶ Robert Barr Smith, *The Last Hurrah of the James-Younger Gang*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 5.

²⁴⁷ “Jesse James’ Latest Expository: Effort—A Poor Opinion of Bligh and Pinkerton,” *Leavenworth Weekly Times*, September 30, 1875.

²⁴⁸ William A. Settle, *Jesse James Was His Name: Or, Fact and Fiction Concerning the Careers of the Notorious James Brothers of Missouri*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1977), 41-42.

Kentucky. I will take the present opportunity to inform you that Bligh's recent statement about the James and Younger boys, robbing the Huntington bank, is false. I know that Jarrett and the Youngers had no hand in the robbery, and if the wounded robber is ever recognized, it will undoubtedly be seen that he is not a James, a Younger, or Jarrett. The world can now see that neither one of the Jameses and Youngers are the men shot and captured. Every bold bank robbery in the country is laid on us.²⁴⁹

In the conclusion of the letter, James clarified his and Cole Younger's relationship: "I and Cole Younger are not friends, but I know he is innocent of the Huntington robbery, and I feel it my duty to defend him and his innocent and persecuted brothers from the false and slanderous reports circulated against them."²⁵⁰ Like many of James' letters to newspapers, he declared his innocence of a specific crime and emphasized the point that any bank robbery in the country was associated with him because of his notoriety.

Through September, despite the conspicuous James letter in the *Nashville American*, the James-Younger gang remained the prime suspects for the Huntington Bank robbery. By October, however, the identities of the bank robbers became clear as an Illinois newspaper noted, and a telegram from Lexington, Kentucky, to the *Chicago Tribune*, provided new evidence:

The identification of one of the gang as the notorious Thompson McDaniels, a Missouri desperado, has been fully verified, and the conclusion of the Louisville detectives, who were certain at first that the dead man was Jesse James. The report that first went abroad, that the robbery had been committed by the Jameses and Youngers, of Missouri, having been thus partially disproven, a great deal of interest is felt as to who the other members of the gang are. The robbery was done exactly like similar affairs which have occurred in Kentucky, Missouri and Iowa, and a little light upon this transaction might settle beyond reasonable doubt the identity of these bold Night-Riders.²⁵¹

At this juncture, the telegram revealed more details from the correspondent's source:

There is a sort of Freemasonry existing between the old guerillas, and the source from which the news comes entitles it to a hearing. My informant says the four men who did the Huntington business are old bandits at that kind of work, but little known to the public. They have done their work quietly for years, letting the Jameses and Youngers get credit for their deeds, and themselves enjoy the ill-gotten gains. The four men who

²⁴⁹ "Jesse James' Latest Expository."

²⁵⁰ "Jesse James' Latest Expository."

²⁵¹ "Identified: McDaniel's Partner In The Huntington Bank Robbery," *Cairo Bulletin*, October 3, 1875.

robbed the Huntington bank, this man affirms, were Thompson McDaniels, now dead—Clell Miller, Jack Kean, and Calvin Carter.²⁵²

The telegram went on to reveal that these specific outlaws lived near Lexington, Kentucky, while another robber was in custody, and that the other two bandits supposedly headed for Mississippi.

After the dust settled, and the perpetrators of the Huntington bank robbery were identified, the notion that the James-Younger gang robbed the Huntington Bank persisted through subsequent years. Despite Jack Kean being tried and sentenced to twelve years in prison for the robbery, the James Gang narrative remained a staple of Huntington folklore. Historian William A. Settle, an expert on Jesse James, uses the same evidence to discuss the James-Younger Gang as not being the Huntington bank robbers.²⁵³ If the ordinary sorts of crimes in this chapter thus far have faded in the historical memory of Huntington some significant crimes, however, have also managed to disappear.

Isaac Mitchell, Huntington's first Marshal, policed the young city with a tough disposition. The *Cincinnati Gazette* noted: "Mr. Mitchell was one of the most efficient, popular and successful Marshals."²⁵⁴ A man by the name of Allen, accompanied by an unknown woman, arrived in Huntington on June 25, 1876, and stayed the night. "During the day information reached here that the male party was a horse-thief from Greenfield, Ohio. Thereupon Marshal Mitchell and Mr. Turner, of this city, at once started pursuit. At 1 o'clock this morning they overtook the thief near Hurricane station."²⁵⁵ As the horse-thief headed towards the Kanawha Valley, he was pursued by the Marshal leading to a deadly confrontation between the two:

Mr. Mitchell, jumping over the back of and into the thief's buggy, called on him to surrender. A tough-and-tumble-hand-to-hand and pistol fight ensued in which Mr.

²⁵² "Identified."

²⁵³ Settle, *Jesse James Was His Name*, pp. 233-261.

²⁵⁴ "A Terrible Tragedy," *Cincinnati Gazette*, Cincinnati, Ohio, June 27, 1876.

²⁵⁵ "A Horse-Thief's Desperate Resistance," *Daily Dispatch*, June 28, 1876.

Mitchell was mortally wounded. The thief then, with an oath, turned and shot Mr. Turner, who was snapping his revolver at him. Leaving his horse and buggy he stole another near there and made, it is supposed, in the direction of Gallipolis. —Mitchell and Turner were found lying half a mile apart, each supposing the other was dead. Mr. Mitchell, though scarcely conscious, was holding the stolen horse.²⁵⁶

The confrontation led to the death of Marshal Mitchell and left Turner severely wounded. Mayor Burke of Huntington offered a \$500 reward for the arrest of the murderer. It was not long before “Allen” was caught in Middleport, Ohio, as the *Daily Dispatch* noted: “He crossed the ferry at Middleport, riding a horse stolen from the ferryman’s father, and was recognized as the same.”²⁵⁷ Because of the murderer’s capture, great excitement spread from Middleport to Huntington, as Huntingtonians awaited his arrival in the city via the Ohio River.

From Huntington, a sheriff from Winfield took Allen back to Putnam County on charges for the shootings of Mitchell and Turner that took place in his county.²⁵⁸ Angry Huntingtonians formed a vigilance committee, a common nineteenth-century form of lynch-mobs.²⁵⁹ They boarded a C&O Railroad train headed for Winfield. “On Friday night eighteen citizens, undisguised, appeared at the jail, and taking the keys from the jailor, took the prisoner out, and proceeded with him some two miles from town, and there hung him to a tree. The murderer left the jail singing, but the lynchers made him soon cease from that sort of bravado.”²⁶⁰ Other accounts of the lynching differ somewhat.

The Bel Air, Maryland *Aegis & Intelligencer* reported the same details as other newspapers regarding the particulars of Mitchell’s murder. However, one notable difference concerning two unknown women appeared in that newspaper:

²⁵⁶ “A Terrible Tragedy.”

²⁵⁷ “The Horse-Thief and Murderer of Marshal Mitchell Arrested,” *Daily Dispatch*, June 29, 1876.

²⁵⁸ “The Horse-Thief and Murderer.”

²⁵⁹ “The Horse-Thief and Murderer.”

²⁶⁰ “The Murderer Lynched,” *Gallipolis Journal*, Gallipolis, Ohio, July 06, 1876.

Allen was brought to Huntington and placed in jail, but a mob broke open the jail and took Allen out for the purpose of hanging him. As they were about to adjust the rope around Allen's neck, two ladies made their way through the crowd, and implored mercy for the quivering wretch. The crowd paused in their work, giving the sheriff time to take the prisoner back to jail. On Saturday Allen was again taken from the jail, at Winfield, W Va., where he had been carried out by the authorities, and hung by a mob.²⁶¹

The short article from the *Aegis* provided a different account from the time Allen arrived in Huntington and was subsequently taken to Winfield. At this point, the newspapers noted that when Allen arrived in Huntington, he came with an unknown woman. A special telegram from Huntington to the *Daily Dispatch* stated: "That the lady went down the river at 10 o'clock A.M., and landed at Southpoint, "when Mitchell began his pursuit of Allen."²⁶² The unknown woman's disruption in Huntington provided enough time for the Putnam County sheriff to arrive and extradite Allen, merely delaying his lynching. Her disruption also encouraged Huntingtonians' formation of a vigilance committee.

After Allen was declared dead by a coroner, the excitement died down in the 60-mile stretch of cities and towns connected by the C & O Railroad. The only name given for the murderer was Allen although the *Gallipolis Journal* provided some details about who Allen possibly was: "Our exchanges speak of him as J. M. Cox and as M. Johnson. On his person at the time of his arrest in Pomeroy were slips from newspapers giving accounts of the shooting of a colored waiter on the steamer J. B. Maud on the Mississippi River, by one J. M. Cox of Texas."²⁶³ Additionally, the *Cincinnati Enquirer* provided some other details about "Allen's" personal effects as well, the newspaper noted: "The murderer had a number of fifty-dollar counterfeit bills and an assortment of burglar's skeleton keys upon his person when arrested."²⁶⁴

²⁶¹ "The News," *Aegis & Intelligencer*, Bel Air, Maryland, July 07, 1876.

²⁶² "A Horse Thief's Desperate Resistance," *Daily Dispatch*, Richmond, Virginia, June 28, 1876.

²⁶³ "The Murderer Lynched," *Gallipolis Journal*, July 06, 1876.

²⁶⁴ "Special Dispatch to the Cincinnati Enquirer," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, July 07, 1876.

As a result of an outlaw making his way to Huntington, the city lost its first law enforcement officer, and the community grieved. As the summer of 1876 continued, more vigilance committees reacted to crime, and another lynching took place.

LYNCING IN THE HISTORICAL MEMORY OF HUNTINGTON

Mob violence and vigilante justice often inhabit contemporary minds as common practice in nineteenth-century America. The impatience regarding due process and the criminal justice system, spurred by social, cultural, and economic differences, often led to racially charged lynching in the name of justice.²⁶⁵ Historians traditionally associated lynching with the Old South during the antebellum and postbellum periods. Recent scholarship though has explored lynching beyond the South and has examined the West, Midwest, and the Northeast along with the Mid-Atlantic region where Huntington, West Virginia is.²⁶⁶

With some aspects of Huntington's history, historical accuracy falls short, facts became misconstrued, and false historical memories are nurtured. In many respects, the inaccuracies in Huntington's history derive from nineteenth-century newspaper reporting. Articles printed in various newspapers did not convey full details about certain events, likely causing some confusion to contemporary readers. Misleading newspaper headlines were especially true in 1876 when West Virginia saw six lynchings take place in the general region of Huntington and Charleston. These cases can help rectify these historical inaccuracies. There is only a small amount of existing literature regarding two such cases, that of Mort Lee, and the almost forgotten lynching of Sam Camden. As with J.M. Cox's lynching, Lee's did not occur in Huntington, nor

²⁶⁵ Michael J. Pfeifer, *Rough Justice: Lynching and American Society, 1874-1947*, (Champaign: University Press of Illinois, 2004), 94.

²⁶⁶ See Michael J. Pfeifer, *Lynching Beyond Dixie: American Mob Violence Outside the South*, (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2013).

did the crimes they were accused of committing happen in Huntington, but their lynchings have been recorded as taking place in that city.²⁶⁷

In August 1876, the rape of nine-year-old Amazetta Hatfield, the daughter of police officer D.K. Hatfield, shook the community. While not completely related, Amazetta's assault was preceded by another crime that took place which had been investigated by Hatfield. The *Wheeling Intelligencer* provided details from the chaotic evening of August 16, 1876:

T.H. Hobach, a colored barber, was arrested at the instance of Mr. Cole, also colored, for the seduction of his wife. The Justice failed to find evidence sufficient for the binding over of Hobach, and, when the moon came forth, that injured husband came forth with her in search of the despoiler of his domestic happiness. He found him sitting upon a chair in front of his barber-shop, and, with some remark relative to the trial, struck him three times, when Hobach drew a revolver and fired at his then retreating assailant four times. Following him several squares, he fired three more shots, all of which failed to take effect. Both participants were arrested and locked up.²⁶⁸

The incident between Hobach and Cole provides further details to the amount of crime taking place in the city, shortly after a lynching. An hour after the confrontation between Hobach and Cole, Amazetta Hatfield “came staggering and bleeding into her mother’s chamber.”²⁶⁹ Soon thereafter, Officer Hatfield arrested Sam Camden, an African American cook, for the assault on his daughter.

Reports of Camden’s arrest offered varying details of the crime and what happened the following day. The *Daily Gazette* noted, “Even the negroes themselves threatened at the time to lynch the brute, and Hatfield, the father of the ruined child, while attempting to avenge her by shooting the negro, was arrested and closely confined until the negro was safely guarded and out

²⁶⁷ Adrienne Beasley, “Lynching in West Virginia.” Carter G. Woodson Project, http://www.marshall.edu/carterwoodson/adrienne_beasley.asp.

²⁶⁸ “West Virginia Justice,” *Wheeling Intelligencer*, August 23, 1876.

²⁶⁹ “West Virginia Justice.”

of his reach. Soon afterward Hatfield was admitted bail to keep the peace in the sum of \$200.”²⁷⁰ Other newspapers related that Hatfield attempted to shoot Camden in the Magistrates’ Court.²⁷¹ After a physician examined Amazetta and concluded she was raped, residents quickly organized to relieve the law of Camden. However, to prevent further chaos, and to protect the accused rapist, Camden was “bound over and imprisoned at Barboursville.”²⁷² In the face of public cries for a lynching, law enforcement tried to maintain proper channels of due process, despite immense pressure to do otherwise from white and black Huntingtonians.

As Camden was taken to Barboursville for proper legal proceedings, residents of Huntington boarded a train at the C&O Railroad station and also headed for that town. The vigilance committee delegated specific roles for those involved, with its main priority to obtain possession of Samuel Camden. “They then proceeded to elect their captain and lieutenant, and every man was numbered and masked.”²⁷³ The *Intelligencer* noted: “The jail was quietly surrounded, the Captain placing his guards by numbers. Admittance demanded, refused, forced. The Jailor, his wife, and the Deputy Sheriff were captured, and after some trouble and rough demonstration on the part of the band, the keys were obtained and Camden taken from the jail to the train.”²⁷⁴ From this interval, the vigilance committee fired pistol shots into the air, and engaged in “inappropriate singing.”²⁷⁵

After the mob had placed Camden on the train, they headed west and found a tree suitable for their lawless actions.

²⁷⁰ “A Negro Lynched,” *Daily Gazette*, Wilmington, Delaware, August 23, 1876.

²⁷¹ “An Outrage Upon a Little Girl—The Offender Likely to Be Lynched,” *Daily Dispatch*, August 19, 1876.

²⁷² “West Virginia Justice,” *Wheeling Intelligencer*, August 23, 1876.

²⁷³ “West Virginia Justice.”

²⁷⁴ “West Virginia Justice.”

²⁷⁵ “West Virginia Justice.”

After running two miles, Camden was placed upon the stand for confession and preparation. In a low and broken language he confessed the crime. He had repented sincerely and continually. Thought perhaps he ought to die for the misfortune of placing himself in the way of temptation, and preferred death to torture. By a two-thirds vote death was agreed upon.²⁷⁶

Other newspapers reported that Camden preferred death to castration, while most newspapers that covered the story stated Camden was left hanging in the tree.²⁷⁷ The lynching of Samuel Camden marked the sixth lynching in West Virginia from January to August in 1876.

Newspapers noted the use of the C&O by lynch mobs, and stated: “If there is any virtue in lynch law, the western sixty miles of C. & O., ought to perceive and receive it, this being the sixth victim since New Year’s 1876.”²⁷⁸

By June of 1879, West Virginia had gained a reputation for lawlessness as newspapers discussed the continued trend of frontier-style violence and vigilantism in the state. One account noted, “West Virginia is acquiring a very unwholesome and unenviable reputation among her sister States as being sort of a head centre for desperados and lawless doings. Save Kentucky there is no other State this side of the territories where the law is defied with as much *non-chalance* and recklessness as in our own.”²⁷⁹ The lynching of Mort Lee, though mistakenly associated with Huntington, contributed to the image, at least somewhat justified by frontier style violence and vigilantism in West Virginia.²⁸⁰ This error likely stems from the newspaper articles about the case bearing the dateline “Huntington, W. VA.” While multiple newspapers covered this story, none of them stated that the crime or lynching of Lee took place in Huntington.²⁸¹

²⁷⁶ “West Virginia Justice.”

²⁷⁷ “Preferred Death,” *Wheeling Intelligencer*, August 19, 1876.; and “West Virginia Justice,” *Daily Dispatch*, August 22, 1876.

²⁷⁸ “West Virginia Justice.”

²⁷⁹ “The Red Men,” *Weekly Register*, June 11, 1879.

²⁸⁰ Beasley, “Lynching in West Virginia.”

²⁸¹ “Horrible Murder,” *Weekly Register*, Point Pleasant, West Virginia, January 13, 1876. “Lynch Law, Cabell County Vigilantes,” *Democrat*, Weston, West Virginia, January 31, 1876. “Lynch Law in Kanawha,” *Weekly Register*, February 3, 1876.

Lee's only involvement with Huntington is that he was brought to the city via the Ohio River so he could be sent back to Coal Valley (now Montgomery, WV) by train.

Lee was accused of attacking the wife of Isaac Settle. The *New York Times* noted the details of Lee's assault, "She resisted him until she became unconscious, and was discovered several hours later bound and gagged, her collar-bone broken, her tongue almost wrenched from her mouth, and otherwise seriously injured."²⁸² After the alleged rape happened, "Lee, knowing the peculiarity of the West Virginians in this respect, fled for dear life. By almost superhuman exertions and after considerable suffering he got as far as Parkersburg."²⁸³ Lee was caught in Fayette County in time to prevent a mob from lynching another African American believed to be Lee.²⁸⁴ Then, "Lee was put under the custody of an officer sent from Parkersburg to Huntington by an Ohio River steamer."²⁸⁵ The waiting lynch mob, hearing that law enforcement officials had sent Lee to Huntington, rapidly responded by heading for that city.

Miners from Coal Valley arrived shortly after in the city and took him back with the intentions to hang him.²⁸⁶ Once they arrived in Fayette County, "Lee was taken by the mob, if so orderly and methodical a party of West Virginia gentlemen can properly be so designated, some distance from the station and hanged."²⁸⁷ Other newspapers as well account for Lee's geographical journey, such as the *Iola Register* from Kansas. The brief article therein discussed the crime and lynching of Lee, but concluded with details of how Lee was in Huntington: "He

²⁸² "Mob Law In West Virginia," *New York Times*, July 9, 1879.

²⁸³ "Swift, Terrible, and Deserved," *Centre Reporter*, Centre Hall, PA., July 17, 1879.

²⁸⁴ "Swift, Terrible, and Deserved." The article claims Lee was caught in Fayette County, which is a considerable distance from Parkersburg that is in Wood County along the Ohio River; no accounts provide details of whether he took a train to Fayette County that would explain the discrepancy of the geographic distance of 139 miles.

²⁸⁵ "Swift, Terrible, and Deserved."

²⁸⁶ "Swift, Terrible, and Deserved."

²⁸⁷ "Swift, Terrible, and Deserved."

was taken from a train while being conveyed, a prisoner, to Huntington.”²⁸⁸ The role of the C&O, in this case, is evidenced in an account from West Virginia historian Otis K. Rice, who described the events of Lee’s lynching in *Charleston and the Kanawha Valley an Illustrated History*:

Soon afterward a Fayette County deputy sheriff and a posse arrived in Huntington, accompanied by a mob of about 300 men. In order to avoid interference with regular passenger service, the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad provided them with a special train for the return journey. The sheriff of Kanawha County, who had gone to Huntington, succeeded only with great difficulty in preventing the irate mob from taking Lee from the train at some point along the way.²⁸⁹

While certainly the 1870s in Huntington suffered from crimes of various sorts, lynching in Huntington was less common than historical accounts argue. Rice’s account of Lee’s lynching is accurate, and Athey’s account is slightly off but still provides useful information. The lynching of Samuel Camden seems completely forgotten in Huntington’s history. Camden’s lynching, like Cox’s, did not take place in Huntington either, though Huntingtonians conducted the two lynchings in 1876. The three cases of lynchings from 1876-1879 associated with Huntington certainly illustrate strong elements of “frontier justice” more usually associated with Western settlements.

²⁸⁸ “Minor Notes,” *Iola Register*, July 18, 1879.

²⁸⁹ Otis K. Rice, *Charleston and the Kanawha Valley An Illustrated History*, (Northridge: Windsor Publications, Inc., 1981), 58-59. See also Louis L. Athey, “William Nelson Page: Traditionalist Entrepreneur of the Virginias,” *West Virginia History*, Vol. 46. 1985, 42. Athey provided useful insights to Lee’s lynching, such as connecting a name to one of the lynchers, who openly bragged about his involvement with the lynching to a New Jersey crowd at a gala for the Cooper-Hewitt Company that owned the Gauley Mountain Coal Company. Another point of interest that Athey examined was Page’s role in the lynching of Mort Lee: “Page helped supervise Lee’s return from Charleston to Coal Valley where Lee was lynched. Page characterized his part in the lynching as that of a “father confessor” helping Lee to comprehend his fate and to make peace with himself. He justified the lynching as swift, frontier justice needed to check further violent acts by the unruly and ignorant.

CONCLUSION

It is easy to draw parallel comparisons regarding crime between the Western frontier and Huntington, West Virginia. Despite strong similarities, the two regions also had notable differences. Historian Kristofer Allfeldt makes an interesting distinction regarding crime and geography in the nineteenth-century United States:

The revision of the West extends to its very existence, or at least its unique status. Some commentators argue that it is impossible to separate the Wild West—either geographically or historically—from the rest of the nation, regarding nothing unique about the West, arguing that violence was equally endemic in the gang-ridden slums of the metropolitan areas of the eastern seaboard and the Reconstruction and Jim Crow South.²⁹⁰

Allfeldt stresses the point that crime was not unique to the West, as crime in the East and Old South continued at analogous rates. Likewise, he also makes an interesting argument about the frequency of crime in the concluding decades of the nineteenth-century: “The recorded crime rates in the communities of the West in the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s were actually no higher, overall, than those in comparable Eastern regions.”²⁹¹ The role of railroads in the West and West Virginia provides another arena of comparison.

Historically, the role of railroads in America highlights one of the greatest industrial achievements of the nineteenth century. The railroads unified America by crisscrossing the country and opening up mobility and accessibility not available before. Again, Allfeldt noted the unique role of railroads and their connection to crime in the West:

The railroad was central to the criminal history of the West. The railroad companies are the target of much of the frustration of the little man. Like the huge ranchers, the large mining companies, and the vast logging companies, the railroads were the antithesis of the American Dream. They stifled competition. They controlled the law. They used

²⁹⁰ Allfeldt, *Crime and the Rise of Modern America*, 29.

²⁹¹ Allfeldt, *Crime and the Rise of Modern America*, 31.

strong-arm tactics. In short, they negated the power of the individual and inspired the “justified” violence which is seen as so much a part of Western history.²⁹²

The actions of railroads out West created and aided the criminal atmosphere that became synonymous with frontier violence and justice. In West Virginia, the railroads played a completely different social, cultural, and economic role than they did in the West. In comparison to the West, West Virginia prospered because of the railroads, and residents did not view railroads necessarily as an enemy that stripped them of the American Dream. One of the first lines built by the C&O was a direct route between Huntington and Charleston. The sixty-mile stretch of tracks between the new city and the capital city offered proponents of rough justice a means to alleviate their impatience for due process.

From New Years of 1876 to August of that year, West Virginians engaged in six lynchings with another in 1879. Huntington was directly involved with three of those lynchings, despite the fact they did not take place in the city. What all six of those lynchings had in common was the use of the C&O Railroad. In each case, the lynch mobs boarded a C&O train to obtain the person being lynched and to reach a place beyond city limits to conduct the lynchings. For supporters of rough justice in West Virginia, the railroads served as a tangible extension of their worldview and received no sanctions from the railroads as long as the lynch mobs did not interrupt regular passenger car service.

Overall, crime in Huntington consisted mostly of the petty nuisances of ordinary crimes that typically derived from vice common to small localities and new railroad towns. Most importantly, the ordinary crimes that happened from 1871-1875 illustrate how law enforcement handled crime, how newspapers reported criminal activity, and how residents reacted to crime in

²⁹² Allerfeldt, *Crime and the Rise of Modern America*, 41-42.

a new city. When crime escalated to more heinous acts, such as in the murder of Isaac Mitchell or the rape of Amazetta Hatfield, vigilance committees formed rapidly. Law enforcement attempted to maintain due process, despite the violent outcome. The efforts to administer due process in the murder of Mitchell and the rape of Hatfield reflected Northern practices and respect for the law, although the impatience displayed by Huntingtonians regarding due process and the criminal justice system largely reflected Southern trends of mob violence in the nineteenth century.²⁹³

Finally, after the community of relative strangers converged in Huntington, crime manifested itself, and gradually escalated which caused residents to react by forming benevolent groups to attempt to curb vice. When more serious crimes occurred, the cultural and social dynamic split in Huntingtonians witnessed other residents' impatience for due process and an unwavering trust in the criminal justice system. In the 1880s, crime appears to persist with public fighting, theft, and alcohol-related incidents. Regarding a police department, census data from 1880 indicates that the city had an official police department, albeit a small police force.²⁹⁴ Statistics of crime in Huntington during the 1880s are, like most other aspects of the city's history during that decade, scarce. The scant evidence shows patterns of similar crimes from 1871 to 1872, but other newspapers do provide evidence of more violent crimes. Regarding primary sources for Huntington, the 1880s are, indeed, an elusive decade in the city's history.

²⁹³ Pfeifer, *Rough Justice: Lynching and American Society, 1874-1947*, 4-6.

²⁹⁴ *1880 West Virginia Federal Census Schedules, Brooke, Cabell, Calhoun, Clay, and Doddridge Counties*. (College Park: Bureau of the Census, 1970). 133, 148. The 1880 census for Huntington lists Schuyler Donella as the Chief of Police and Eugene McCullough as a policeman. Furthermore, since the census year is recorded as beginning June 01, 1879, it is probable that Huntington had a uniformed police department by 1879 and possibly earlier in that decade.

While petty crimes continued in the 1880s, newspapers from other West Virginia cities offer a glimpse into the more heinous crimes of that decade. One example from the *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer* accounts for a crime of passion involving a woman as the perpetrator: “Alex McCommas and Alice Canterbury were talking together in Huntington when Alice Adkins came up behind and plunged a knife into the back of the Canterbury girl, inflicting a dangerous wound.”²⁹⁵ Unfortunately, further evidence has not been found, and any information on a trial is unknown.

Other victims of violent acts in Huntington during the 1880s illustrate crimes against police with one example taking place in 1887. The *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer* reported a crime against Policeman Bouden near Marshall College:

Policeman Bouden of Huntington, while out near Marshall College, was decoyed off his beat into a secluded spot by a racket which he thought to be a fight, and was there attacked by four negroes and terribly beaten. He was pounded and bruised on the head with a revolver and beer bottle, several ribs were kicked loose from the back bone and broken and he was mangled and mutilated in a fearful measure. The negroes intended to kill him and no doubt would have done so, had not Mr. Garland, the brother of the Mayor, come along and put them to flight. The negroes were all arrested that night and lodged in jail. Bouden’s recovery is considered doubtful.

The Point Pleasant *Weekly Register* printed the same article with an addition that illustrates possible motives beyond due process: “Bouden’s recovery is considered doubtful as he is a Knight of Labor it is feared that his friends in that organization may lynch the negroes, should his injuries terminate fatally.”²⁹⁶ Though no further evidence of either crime is known, these two crimes offer a glimpse into the more violent aspect of Huntington during the 1880s as city boosters were in the process of modernizing the young city.

²⁹⁵ “Through The State,” *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, September 29, 1885.

²⁹⁶ *Weekly Register*, Point Pleasant, West Virginia, September 21, 1887.

Crime in Huntington's earliest decade illustrates petty and violent activity typical of many small, relatively unformed cities. The evidence suggests that in the 1880s, Huntington modernized its law enforcement and judicial systems as a result of the violence that occurred from 1875-79. Throughout the 1880s, Huntington transformed its infrastructure and implemented modern technology such as telephones, gas lights, electricity, running water and electric streetcars, leaving its frontier period behind.²⁹⁷ The next chapter focuses on the immense changes and the efforts of residents who helped usher in the technological and ecological change of Huntington beginning in 1883. As the 1890s emerged, Huntington was a different city, far stronger economically. However, to fully modernize the city, paved streets and submerged sewers generated a cultural, sanitary, and economic clash between residents and the municipal government that lasted into the early twentieth century.

²⁹⁷ Two notable crimes in Huntington took place in 1892 that resembled frontier violence. The public hanging of Allen Harrison in 1892, and the C & O train robbery by Tom Collins and Burrell Forgey marked the year. For information on the public hanging and the train robbery see <https://www.theclio.com/web/entry?id=27241>.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRIVATE RESIDENTS MODERNIZE HUNTINGTON

“And there is a good society of steady going people who make no pretensions. Like Swift, they are what they are, and for one, I am able to say that they are warm hearted, hospitable, bent upon getting ahead in the world, decidedly western in their energy, but without that raw, unbaked air which characterizes the new communities of the West.”²⁹⁸

The city of Huntington throughout its origins, growth, and maturity represents distinct phases of urban development. Initial growth in the city during the 1870s was carried out by the founders. By the 1880s, private residents took on the mantle of city boosters and began modernizing the city. Gas, electricity, public water, along with a streetcar system, marked a turning point in the transformation of the city. Two aspects of modern infrastructure were not implemented until later; city streets remained unpaved, and the city lacked a modern sewage system heading into the 1890s. Without sewers, the city had to rely on cesspools and backyard privies, creating unsanitary conditions. Unpaved streets resulted in muddy thoroughfares with stagnant pools of water that also contributed to an unhealthy environment. Residents challenged the city council for not paving streets and building a modern sewage system. By 1891, the municipal government required residents to pay the two-thirds total cost of sewerage and street paving, a system that continued until 1910, when most of the public works had been completed. The implementation of public works through the 1880s showcases how private residents modernized the city, and by 1890 attempted to confront political hegemony, and reluctantly paid

²⁹⁸ “Huntington City,” *Wheeling Intelligencer*, May 2, 1883.

for street paving and sewerage over the course of a generation to make a healthy and modern city.

This chapter seeks to illustrate how the city of Huntington modernized by implementing modern infrastructure and technology such as the telephone, gas, electricity, running water, and sanitary sewers.²⁹⁹ Historian Joel Tarr discusses the importance of the urban network which he describes as a series of technological improvements in the late nineteenth century that characterized modern twentieth-century cities.³⁰⁰ This chapter is broken down into five sections that each examine a facet of technological and infrastructural changes. Huntington's transition from a dirt-street, frontier-style city to a modern city with public works marked the growing maturity of the young city. Some background in the history of American public works will fit Huntington into the larger themes of American urban history.

URBAN PUBLIC WORKS IN THE U.S.

As large industrial cities in the Northeast experienced rapid population increases during the 1870s, Huntington was barely out of its conception phase. From the 1870s to the early 1890s Huntington caught up to the problems that larger industrial cities had already experienced regarding sanitation, clean water, and other infrastructural issues. The lack of modern infrastructure in Huntington resulted in part from the economic depressions of the 1870s and 1880s that may have possibly stunted the city's population. Moreover, the city council did not own or control most of the property in Huntington, and efforts to get the primary owners of land, the Central Land Company, to pave the streets largely failed.

²⁹⁹ Sources for utilities and public works in Huntington are scattered, and because of this classical historical research problem, some gaps through the 1880s to the early 1900s exist.

³⁰⁰ Joel Tarr and Gabriel Dupuy, *Technology and the Rise of the Networked City in Europe and America*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988).

George Seldon Wallace's two books about the history of Huntington provide a timeline of the city's public works, though he does not place Huntington in the larger picture of American history, and rarely cites his sources. Some of Wallace's timelines for public works are inaccurate, and some are correct.³⁰¹ For example, he states that Huntington did not have gasworks for public and private uses until 1899.³⁰² This date does not accurately reflect the implementation of public and private uses for gas lighting and heating which began in 1883 in Huntington.³⁰³ Wallace's dates for electricity's installation also appears inaccurate. Wallace (and other subsequent local historians) cite a 20 November 1886 *Huntington Advertiser*, the successor of the *Huntington Independent*, as the main source identifying the first use of electric lights in the city.³⁰⁴ Evidence from other West Virginia newspapers indicates that actual dates regarding technological improvements are indeed different from published histories of Huntington. This chapter seeks to resolve some of the inconsistencies in Huntington's public works history.

It is important to note that utilities, though intended for public uses, were commonly owned by private businesses. As is the case with many subfields of history, specialization within urban history tends to separate utilities and public works. Even an in-depth examination of public works in America such as *History of Public Works in the United States, 1776-1976* offers broad ranges of dates for the implementation of utilities and public works.³⁰⁵ The same goes for older and newer urban histories that focus on singular or dual aspects of utilities and public works. Natural gas for street lighting appears first for most cities, though some cities constructed water

³⁰¹ Wallace, *Cabell County Annals and Families*, 170-309; and *Huntington Through Seventy-Five Years* (Huntington: Garret & Massie, 1947), 10-15.

³⁰² Wallace, *Cabell County Annals and Families*, 282-283.

³⁰³ "Gas Works for Huntington," *Wheeling Intelligencer*, November 17, 1883.

³⁰⁴ Wallace, *Cabell County Annals and Families*, 284-285.

³⁰⁵ Ellis L. Armstrong, *History of Public Works in the United States, 1776-1976*, (Chicago: American Public Works Association, 1976).

systems before gas networks; they were not completed as quickly as gas lines for lighting: “In the United States, Baltimore was the first to do so [by implementing a gas network], beginning in 1816.”³⁰⁶ After 1816, numerous cities across America implemented networks of pipes that delivered manufactured gas for street lighting purposes.

Historian Carl Smith states that Philadelphia was the first city to install a city-wide water system, building it between the 1790s and early 1820s.³⁰⁷ Other cities followed suit by installing waterworks; however, newer cities in post-Civil War America typically installed waterworks throughout the 1880s and early 1890s.³⁰⁸ For electricity, debates over which city was the first to have it depends on how it was used, whether for telephones, street lighting, or private use determines each city’s claim. Generally speaking though, from 1879 to 1882, Buffalo, NY, Cleveland, New York City, Philadelphia, and San Francisco had electricity for multiple uses. Historian David E. Nye contends that most cities in the United States had electricity by 1885.³⁰⁹

Some of the most important factors of public works deals with sanitary living standards. In the United States, the rising concern for sanitation prompted cities to implement sewers and storm drains between 1860 and 1910.³¹⁰ As Americans and urban officials eventually accepted the germ theory of disease in the 1880s, many cities, old and new, began the process of implementing sewers and storm drains, and paving their streets. While older cities had to retrofit their streets, newer cities had a slight advantage installing sewers and drains before paving their

³⁰⁶ Mark H. Rose, *Cities of Light and Heat: Domesticating Gas and Electricity in Urban America*, (University Park: Penn State Press, 1995), 17. For a more detailed list of cities that installed gaslights see Cutler J. Cleveland, *Concise Encyclopedia of the History of Energy*, (Cambridge: Academic Press, 2009), 164.

³⁰⁷ Carl Smith, *City Water, City Life: Water and the Infrastructure of Ideas in Urbanizing Philadelphia, Boston, and Chicago*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), pp. 6-7.

³⁰⁸ Armstrong, *History Of Public Works*, 222.

³⁰⁹ David E. Nye, *Electrifying America: Social Meanings of a New Technology, 1880-1940*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990). 1.

³¹⁰ Armstrong, *History of Public Works in the United States*, 434.

streets, as was the case with Huntington. For most cities, “the great burst of sewer construction occurred after 1890.”³¹¹ Huntington began implementing sewers, drains, and paving its streets beginning in 1890, but before those crucial public works began, the cityscape no longer looked new due to unsanitary conditions.

Historian Raymond A. Mohl discusses the hygienic and health impact industrialization had on city inhabitants. Though Huntington lacked the major industrial factories of the North, the city’s smaller manufacturing sector still fostered health problems. Mohl noted:

As the industrial machine geared up and as city populations increased rapidly, American urban dwellers began to suffer the consequences of unfettered urban and economic growth. These public health problems included useless sewage disposal methods, undrinkable water, smoky air, ear shattering noise, heaps of smelly garbage and solid wastes, and unconscionably high mortality rates from epidemic disease.³¹²

Since industrial problems affected people regardless of socioeconomic standing, the environmental crisis that took place encouraged public health reforms, fostering broad support. As a result, municipal governments made large strides in sanitation progress. Indeed, Huntington’s condition worsened without sewers, storm drains and paved streets. By 1890, stagnant water, human waste, and horse manure dotted the streets.³¹³

As better sanitation methods such as trunk sewers replaced backyard privies and cesspools, improvements in transportation also helped clean up the environment. Horses, which provided the main form of urban transportation for people in the nineteenth century, left behind roughly 20 to 30 pounds each of manure every day.³¹⁴ To remedy the “urban beast of burden,” many private businessmen implemented Frank Sprague’s electric streetcar design beginning in

³¹¹ Goldfield, *Encyclopedia of American Urban History*, 382.

³¹² Mohl, *The New City*, 174.

³¹³ “We Cry For Help,” *Huntington Advertiser*, July 16, 1890.

³¹⁴ Mohl, *The New City*, 174-175.

1888, and by 1890 “two hundred cities had built or ordered streetcar systems, about 90 percent of them based on Sprague’s patents.”³¹⁵ Huntington though, initially adopted a competing system, soon providing the city with a network of streetcar lines facilitating greater mobility and less dependency on horses by 1888. The combination of sanitation improvements in modern sewage systems, tightened ordinances on free-roaming livestock, and improvements in transportation helped clean up Huntington. In general, the young city followed national trends concerning public works, infrastructure, and sanitation.

TELEPHONES

Huntington in the 1880s, like many other American cities, “saw the beginning of telephone networks.”³¹⁶ Historian Richard R. John states that “Like the telegraph, the telephone was originally designed as a specialty service for an exclusive clientele; it would not be reconfigured as a mass service for the entire population until around 1900, and then only for local calls.”³¹⁷ Huntington fits neatly into John’s statement about who used telephones in the early 1880s. Local historians’ accounts of Huntington’s first telephone services vary, with James Casto citing 1883, and James Morton Callahan giving 1884 as the initial date.³¹⁸ Despite these discrepancies, it seems clear telephones came to Huntington between 1883 and 1884, with an initially minor impact on residents. Casto states:

³¹⁵ Nye, *Electrifying America*, 89.

³¹⁶ Goldfield, *Encyclopedia of American Urban History*, 383.

³¹⁷ Richard R. John, *Network Nation: Inventing American Telecommunications*, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 3.

³¹⁸ See James E. Casto, “City’s Love Affair With Phone Began in 1883,” *Herald Dispatch*, September 05, 2009. See also James Morton Callahan, *Semi-centennial History of West Virginia: With Special Articles on Development and Resources*, (Charlottesville: Semi-Centennial Commission of West Virginia and University of Virginia Press, 1913), 316-318.

In 1883, two local businessmen, George C. Pope and H.C. Everett, entered into a contract with the Southern Bell Telephone Co. of Richmond, Va., whereby Southern Bell permitted the two men to build and operate a single telephone line in Cabell County until such time as the company saw fit to build a telephone exchange in Huntington. Thus, wire was strung from poles and Huntington had its first telephone line, stretching from the Guyandotte Grocery Co. and the Page & Everett stores in Guyandotte to the downtown Book and News store operated by Herman Jenkins on 3rd Avenue between 9th and 10th streets.³¹⁹

This information likely comes from George C. Wallace's *Cabell County Annals and Families*.³²⁰

Callahan's *Semi-Centennial History of West Virginia* rarely cites sources, making it very difficult to discern his evidence in arguing that Huntington's phone service began in 1884. We are left with only a rough estimate for the introduction of telephones in Huntington.

Casto's claim about Pope, Everett, and Jenkins being the first to have telephone service in Huntington aligns with historians' findings. Claude S. Fischer noted that telephone inventor Alexander Graham Bell found some businessmen hesitant to replace the telegraph with the telephone because they valued a written record. Nevertheless, some manufacturers, lawyers, bankers, and the like—and later small shopkeepers—adopted the technology.³²¹ Clearly, the three mentioned Huntingtonians were small business owners. Telephones were in use in Huntington as early as 1883, and certainly by 1884.

On a concluding note about telephones, it is hard to say why the technology did not have a more significant impact on the social and cultural atmosphere of Huntington. Southern Bell services were expensive, and Fischer points to that as a reason why telephones were not popular.³²² Similarly, historian Robert MacDougal makes an interesting case for Bell's business practices, as he stated: "Between 1886 and 1895, the proportion of telephones in small towns and

³¹⁹ Casto, "City's Love Affair."

³²⁰ Wallace, *Cabell County Annals and Families*, 281.

³²¹ Claude S. Fischer, *America Calling: A Social History Of The Telephone To 1940*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 41.

³²² Fischer, *America Calling*, 41.

rural areas only decreased as Bell's urban networks grew."³²³ Perhaps Huntington residents viewed the telephone as an unnecessary utility or more of a luxury. Nevertheless, Huntington did benefit from having an unenthusiastic population regarding the telephone, because in 1888 when electric streetcars were being installed, the Huntington Electric Light Company could erect power lines without serious overcrowding that larger cities like New York and San Francisco experienced.³²⁴ Although phones got off to a slow start, the telephone eventually took off. By the mid-1890s, according to local historians, the telephone had become a mainstay.³²⁵ Around the same time that telephones appeared in Huntington, the city was on the verge of moving away from an aspect of its frontier stage and saw modernization on the horizon.

STEPPING AWAY FROM THE FRONTIER

Heading into the 1880s, as Huntington grew it lacked gas, electricity, water, along with sewers and paved streets. Cabell County's population more than doubled from 6,429 in 1871 to 13,746 by 1881.³²⁶ The increase of the county's population helped transform Huntington from a small railroad town to a city. Indeed, Cabell County's population increase resulted from the C & O Railroad and the Central Land Company providing jobs and real estate. Before utilities emerged, the lack of paved streets was a contentious subject for residents of Huntington who placed some responsibilities for infrastructural improvements in the city on the Central Land Company as it owned the remaining available properties. By 1883, Huntington clearly needed to implement public works, as the health and viability of the city were threatened.

³²³ Robert MacDougal, *The People's Network: The Political Economy of the Telephone in the Gilded Age*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 30.

³²⁴ Eric Shatzberg, "Culture and Technology in the City: Opposition to Mechanized Street Transportation in Late Nineteenth-Century America," in Agatha C. Hughes, Michael Thad Allen and Gabrielle Hecht, eds. *Technologies Of Power: Essays In Honor Of Thomas Parke Hughes And Agatha Chipley Hughes*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 64.

³²⁵ Wallace, *Cabell County Annals and Families*, 281.

³²⁶ "Cabell County," *Weekly Register*, January 19, 1881.

In May 1883, the *Wheeling Intelligencer* detailed the physical growth, economy, and lack of public works in Huntington. The *Intelligencer* noted architectural changes as a sign of the city's growth:

Brick buildings are taking place of frame, especially for business purposes, for the people are satisfied that Huntington has passed safely over the probationary period and has come to stay. In the same confident spirit, handsome homes have been built, beautiful grounds surrounding them, and more are underway. Indeed, the first thing that impresses the visitor is the rush of building operations—in the business center, on the outskirts, everywhere houses are going up and all grades and styles of them. There is not only no falling off in the city's growth, but my information is that there has at no time been more building than now.³²⁷

The journalist emphasized the enterprising spirit of the city before politely criticizing the lack of unpaved streets. "Huntington has the advantage of having come by design, not by accident," crediting the Central Land Company for the design of wide avenues, streets, and alleys.³²⁸ Their condition, however, left much to be desired:

Perhaps it is too soon to find fault with Huntington for not paving her streets—older towns have waited longer—but she cannot afford to let them go undrained. As far as I can see the water lies where it falls, until it finds a way off or the soil absorbs it, and to aggravate the situation a great deal of offal which ought to be removed beyond the city limits is thrown into the streets. This seems to be a habit common to all American settlements, varying only in degree.³²⁹

Notable here is the remark concerning offal, which are the leftovers of butchered animals.

Though not exclusive to Huntington, rotting byproducts of animals helped spread diseases, and tainted water supplies in towns and cities across the United States.

Residents formed an opinion that the Central Land Company's role in public works was negligible. The interview portion of the *Intelligencer* travel account reinforced the tensions between residents and the Central Land Company, the journalist noting,

³²⁷ "Huntington City," *Wheeling Intelligencer*, May 2, 1883.

³²⁸ "Huntington City."

³²⁹ "Huntington City."

An intelligent resident of Huntington agreed with me that something ought to be done, and in his opinion the land company ought to bear a large share of the expense. "Look at it," he said. "Here was farm land which cost the company no more than \$100 an acre in any case. They cut the streets out, and then get over \$14,000 for every acre. You can't buy a lot any place in town for less than \$150, and corner lots at company prices are \$750. There are more to sell and they are going. Now don't you see how well it can afford to help us with streets."³³⁰

By 1883, the Central Land Company still owned most of the properties in Huntington, despite the city having a municipal government for twelve years. The monopoly of property ownership created a division between residents and the Central Land Company that emerged as a central theme regarding public works in Huntington. Residents appeared more concerned about paved streets than utilities in 1883 as existing sources suggest, however, the discussion of paved streets dissipated as the emergence of another public utility was on the horizon. While local business owners recognized the benefits of the telephone, most residents realized the advantages of natural gas for street lighting.

HUNTINGTON BY GASLIGHT

Discoveries of natural gas in Kentucky, Ohio, and West Virginia beginning the 1880s witnessed many gas operators move to the Appalachian region because of the technological developments in procuring, purifying, and transferring the fossil fuel.³³¹ One such example at this time was George W. Crawford and his two brothers, raised in Bolivar, NY, who came to West Virginia and Ohio and commenced their professions in the natural gas industry.³³² The specific date of Crawford's natural gas endeavors in Huntington is unknown, and without records

³³⁰ "Huntington City."

³³¹ David A. Waples, *The Natural Gas Industry in Appalachia: A History from the First Discovery to the Tapping of the Marcellus Shale*, 2d ed., (Jefferson: McFarland, 2012), pp. 55-56.

³³² Waples, *The Natural Gas Industry in Appalachia*, 55. "Crawford was one of the early pioneers of Ohio's and West Virginia's natural gas industry, who, with partners, acquired a great deal of acreage from wildcat drillers. The Crawfords, along with some wealthy citizens, operated independent companies in Charleston and Huntington, W.Va."

indicating his activities, it is hard to discern when residents received the benefits of natural gas. On 02 November 1883, though, West Virginia Secretary of State Randolph Stalnaker, Jr. granted incorporation to the Huntington Gas Company “for the purpose of constructing and operating gas works in the city for illuminating and lighting of all streets, alleys, wharves, houses, public and private within the city.”³³³ The Crawford’s operated independent gas companies in Charleston and Huntington and were not shareholders in the Huntington Gas Company that was comprised of early businessmen Sam Gideon and B.W. Foster.³³⁴

With natural gas making strides in the utility market, manufactured gas also experienced increased uses beginning in the late 1870s. “Prior to the introduction of water gas, ordinary coal gas was the only type of manufactured gas sold, and it had been produced commercially since the early 1800s. Water gas, in contrast, was not used on a wide scale until the late 1870s and early 1880s. Both were used almost solely as a fuel for lighting.”³³⁵ Out of the two manufactured gases, water gas was cheaper and easier to make than its older counterpart, coal gas.³³⁶ However, both water gas and coal gas benefited from not having to rely on drilling wells; either gas could be made in a factory. Whether manufactured coal gas or water gas, both types produced harmful

³³³ *Acts of the West Virginia Legislature At Its Eighteenth Session*, Commencing January 14, 1885, (Wheeling, WV: James B. Taney, Public Printer, 1885), 238.

³³⁴ Waples, *The Natural Gas Industry in Appalachia*, 55; and *Acts of the West Virginia Legislature At Its Eighteenth Session*, Commencing January 14, 1885, (Wheeling, WV: James B. Taney, Public Printer, 1885), 239.

³³⁵ Claudia Goldin and Gary D. Libecap, *The Regulated Economy: A Historical Approach to Political Economy*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 59. According to *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, water gas is a poisonous flammable gaseous mixture that consists chiefly of carbon monoxide and hydrogen with small amounts of methane, carbon dioxide, and nitrogen. It is made by blowing air and then steam over red-hot coke or coal, and is used as a fuel or after carbureting as an illuminant. *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, Eleventh Edition, (Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, 2003), 1413.

³³⁶ Goldin and Libecap, *The Regulated Economy*: 58. Prior to the use of water gas, Goldin and Libecap note that coal gas was expensive and only used for lighting in wealthy homes, neighborhoods, and businesses.

byproducts and pollutants. With the increased uses of manufactured gases, competition naturally entered the gas markets.³³⁷

While competition in the gas market emerged in other cities, Huntington opted for natural gas, seeing that it was readily abundant nearby. A *Wheeling Intelligencer* article confirmed the purpose of the Huntington Gas Company's primary function of lighting.³³⁸ As another *Wheeling Intelligencer* article from November 1883 noted, Huntington's growing population that was a little over 6,000 significantly contributed to Cabell County's 13,746 population estimates.³³⁹ The timing of an increased population and discoveries of natural gas in the vicinity provided gas operators an untapped utility market in Huntington. Meanwhile, throughout 1883, the C & O Railroad quickly benefitted from the new shipping methods for natural gas as it transported a total of 331,502 cubic feet of gas.³⁴⁰

As natural gas became available in Huntington, it was possibly applied to heating before lighting, despite the abundance of coal or firewood normally used then for heating homes and businesses. Two notable Huntington pioneers, Frank Bliss Enslow and A.B. Palmer, helped organize the Huntington Heating Company, and received their charter on September 08, 1883, "for the purpose of manufacturing, procuring and supplying the inhabitants of the City of Huntington and other cities and towns in West Virginia with gas for heating purposes, and for supplying gas as fuel to the inhabitants thereof."³⁴¹ Mentions of the company after that are rare,

³³⁷ Goldin and Libecap, *The Regulated Economy*, 59. Goldin and Libecap examine Chicago and Boston as two examples of competition in each city's gas markets with the cheaper availability of artificial and manufactured gases.

³³⁸ "Gas Works for Huntington," *Wheeling Intelligencer*, November 17, 1883.

³³⁹ "Huntington—The Ensign Car Manufacturing Co.," *Wheeling Intelligencer*, September 10, 1883.

³⁴⁰ Richard P. Rothwell, *Engineering and Mining Journal*, Volume XXXIX, No. 1, January (New York: Scientific Publishing Company, 1885), 8.

³⁴¹ *Acts of the Legislature of West Virginia at its Eighteenth Session*, Commencing January 14, 1885, (Wheeling, WV: James B. Taney, Public Printer, 1885), 211-212. It is unknown if the Huntington Heating Company used manufactured or natural gas.

leaving us to wonder if residents were quick to apply the modern heating source to their homes, businesses, or schools; or if the business actually thrived.

Primary sources detailing natural gas usage in Huntington are scarce. A *Huntington Advertiser* article from December 1884 offers small but important evidence about natural gas lights in the city. The brief article also indicates that the municipal government was responsible for the maintenance of the street lights: “The Street Committee was instructed to procure a limited number of street lamps to replace those broken and locate a few at such new places as necessary, the condition of the city finances requiring the strictest economy in this respect.”³⁴² Interestingly, Huntington experienced enough vandalism to street lamps that the newspaper additionally stated that “the Mayor was authorized to issue a proclamation offering a \$10 reward for information of parties destroying public lamps, and Street Commissioner ordered to post on each lamp.”³⁴³

Though Huntington had a fledgling gas works by 1884, the C & O Railroad continued shipping gas. The *Engineering and Mining Journal* does not provide exact details for where the gas was shipped, but it is probable that some of the gas made its way to Huntington. In 1884 the C & O shipped 285,191 cubic feet of gas.”³⁴⁴ Near the C & O Railroad shops, a derrick was erected for drilling natural gas, as indicated by a *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer* article from December 1886.³⁴⁵ The newspaper noted: “Large blocks of property on both sides of the river in that locality have been leased for drilling purposes.”³⁴⁶

³⁴² “City Council Minutes,” *Huntington Advertiser*, December 06, 1884.

³⁴³ “City Council Minutes.”

³⁴⁴ Rothwell, *Engineering and Mining Journal*, 8.

³⁴⁵ “Through the State,” *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, December 06, 1886.

³⁴⁶ “Through the State.”

The following year, Eustice Gibson, recently retired U.S. senator and noted lawyer who moved to Huntington in 1871, returned to the city and resumed practicing law. Gibson “obtained the sole agency for the Independent Automatic Portable Gas Works in West Virginia.”³⁴⁷ Discussing the benefits of the machine, Gibson noted, “It is a wonderful gas machine, or “economizer,” which is guaranteed to save from fifty to sixty percent in your monthly gas bills.”³⁴⁸ Gibson described how the machine worked:

It is just a simple little machine, constructed on well-established scientific principles. You attach it to the gas meter in your house, and are not required to attend to it. It perfectly controls the condensation, enriches and produces an entirely smokeless flame, of greater candle power and more light to the cubic foot of consumption than is obtained from natural gas.³⁴⁹

While Gibson promoted the portable gas works machine, its application was geared towards manufactured gas, and during the interview, he stated that natural gas tests were satisfactory but still in a testing phase. John H. Russel of Huntington received a franchise on October 07, 1890 for artificial gas, and that franchise passed over to the Consolidated Light and Railway Company.³⁵⁰ Despite the Consolidated Light and Railway Company setting up a plant that supplied Huntington gas for domestic use, its high costs compared to coal stunted large commercial use by residents. Even before the Consolidated Light and Railway Company operated in Huntington, several other Huntingtonians organized gas works as well.

In April 1888, West Virginia’s Secretary of State Henry S. Walker granted a charter to the Huntington Fuel, Power, and Lighting Company. The new company’s purpose was to “construct and operate [a] gas works, to manufacture water gas for lighting, heating and power

³⁴⁷ “Eustice Gibson—Retired to Private Life, Will Run a Gas Machine,” *Wheeling Intelligencer*, March 16, 1887.

³⁴⁸ “Eustice Gibson.”

³⁴⁹ “Eustice Gibson.”

³⁵⁰ Wallace, *Cabell County Annals and Families*, 282-283.

purposes in the city of Huntington.”³⁵¹ At this time, the city of Huntington had accessibility to natural gas that provided heating, lighting, and gas as fuel to operate machinery. Statistics regarding consumption are not available, which leaves it hard to determine the breadth or frequency of use. Local businessmen who entered the natural gas industry did so with a sense that it was a viable enterprise. Otherwise, the gas companies that formed and received charters from 1883 to 1888 would not have developed if interest from residents was low. For the next eleven years, residents of Huntington had the options to heat and light their homes with natural or manufactured gas.

The story of the Triple State Natural Gas and Oil Company of Huntington captures some of the dynamics of this business. Founded in 1888, by 1899 Triple State Natural Gas and Oil had 400 customers in Huntington.³⁵² By 1905 the United States Natural Gas Company absorbed Triple State Natural Gas and Oil, and by 1909 the United Fuel Gas Company took over the United States Natural Gas Company. This consolidation marked the early expansion of Columbia Gas in the Ohio Valley. Despite the merging and consolidating of gas companies, “manufacturers would not become part of Columbia until the 1920s, Columbia’s roots can be traced to 1905, when the Columbia Corporation was formed in Huntington, W. Va., to produce natural gas in that state and eastern Kentucky for delivery to Cincinnati, Ohio.”³⁵³ As a result of the gas companies’ consolidation in the city, residents reacted to higher gas prices, and the Huntington Chamber of Commerce organized the Huntington Development and Gas Company to combat high gas prices.³⁵⁴

³⁵¹ *Acts of the West Virginia Legislature at its Nineteenth Regular Session*, January 9, 1889, (Charleston, WV: Moses W. Donnally, Public Printer, 1889), 457-458.

³⁵² Wallace, *Cabell County Annals and Families*, 282-283.

³⁵³ Waples, *The Natural Gas Industry in Appalachia*, 55.

³⁵⁴ Wallace, *Cabell County Annals and Families*, 282-283.

In 1912, several residents, under the auspices of the Huntington Chamber of Commerce, organized the Huntington Development and Gas Company to help safeguard the community from rising gas prices.³⁵⁵ Control of the local company lay with a board of directors from the Chamber of Commerce to try to prevent its passing over to competitors less devoted to the public welfare.³⁵⁶ The Huntington Development and Gas Company provided a reduction in rates from 20 to 15 cents per thousand cubic feet of gas.³⁵⁷ Falling stock prices from 1916 to 1924 allowed new stockholders who worked for Columbia Gas to buy into, and eventually absorb, the Huntington Development and Gas Company, defeating residents' efforts to combat high gas prices in Huntington. Naturally, in Huntington, as with other American cities, "during the 1920s, local gas and electricity distribution companies came under the control of the rapidly spreading network of holding companies that left local regulatory authorities unable to exercise jurisdiction over costs of services."³⁵⁸

From 1883 into the early 1900s, affluent businessmen entered the natural gas industry to make a profit and to provide modern services to their city. The gas industry in Huntington was successful in the concluding years of the nineteenth century and continued to grow in the 1900s. Huntington followed national trends during the nineteenth-century for implementing its gas network. Like gas, electricity connects a city and brings it into the modern networked era. The next section outlines the coming of electricity to Huntington.

³⁵⁵ Wallace, *Cabell County Annals and Families*, 282. Wallace states that residents were upset with rising gas costs and the increased prices sparked community organization.

³⁵⁶ Wallace, *Cabell County Annals and Families*, 282-283.

³⁵⁷ Wallace, *Cabell County Annals and Families*, 283.

³⁵⁸ Alfred Edward Kahn, *The Economics of Regulation: Principles and Institutions*, Volumes 1-2, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), 30.

BLINDED BY THE LIGHT

Historian Mark H. Rose discusses how the combination of gas and electrical services forged a new urban environment that nurtured “the creation of overlapping social and technological ecologies.”³⁵⁹ Cities across the United States began to physically transform with the emergence of networks that marked the social and technological changes of late-nineteenth-century urban America. “Beginning in the late 1870s, electric lighting began to replace gas, kerosene, and candles. Between 1880 and 1883, numerous businesses, usually retailers, installed arc and incandescent lights. Publicity and sales were their principal motives, although many also sought to advertise their city as part of the race for urban greatness.”³⁶⁰ Huntington was no different in its efforts to electrify the city, as residents paid attention to national trends, organized their efforts and formed an electric company.

A 16 April 1884 article from the Point Pleasant *Weekly Register* stated, “Huntington is seriously considering the project of lighting the city with electricity.”³⁶¹ With the news spreading across West Virginia about Huntington’s possible endeavors in electricity, B.W. Foster and A.B. Palmer, already in the gas industry in Huntington, also entered the electricity business.³⁶² The Huntington Electric Lighting Company was granted a charter on 19 June 1884, “for the purpose

³⁵⁹ Mark H. Rose, “Urban Gas and Electric Systems and Social Change, 1900-1940,” in Joel Tarr and Gabriel Dupuy, *Technology and the Rise of the Networked City in Europe and America*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 230.

³⁶⁰ Tarr and Dupuy, *Technology and the Rise of the Networked City*, 230.

³⁶¹ “State News,” *Weekly Register*, April 16, 1884.

³⁶² B. W. Foster was a shareholder in the Huntington Gas Company, and A. B. Palmer was a shareholder in the Huntington Heating Company. See West Virginia Legislature. *Acts of the Legislature of West Virginia at its Eighteenth Session, Commencing January 14, 1885*, (Wheeling, WV: James B. Taney, Public Printer, 1885), 378-379.

of supplying electricity for all purposes, whether for lighting, motor, storage or other purposes for which it may be used.”³⁶³

The local businessmen involved with the Huntington Electric Lighting Company were some of the earliest migrant residents that established businesses in the city from 1871 to 1872. Just as they contributed to the city’s economy in its infant stage, B.W. Foster, A.B. Palmer, and Samuel Gideon worked as city boosters by engaging in public works projects during the 1880s.³⁶⁴ Huntington businessmen organized efforts to bring electricity to the city as part of their entrepreneurship, and historian Thomas P. Hughes helps put their motives in the larger context of the 1880s: “Electric power systems embody the physical, intellectual, and symbolic resources of the society that constructs them. Therefore, in explaining changes in the configuration of power systems, the historian must examine the changing resources and aspirations of organizations, groups, and individuals.”³⁶⁵

The *Weekly Register* stated: “An Electric Light Company, with a capital of \$50,000, has been organized in Huntington.”³⁶⁶ By October 1884, the *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer* reported that “the Electric Lighting Company, of Huntington, has declared to purchase a 50-horsepower Buckeye engine, which will supply power for 500 lights.”³⁶⁷ Details regarding the winter’s

³⁶³ West Virginia Legislature. *Acts of the Legislature of West Virginia at its Eighteenth Session, Commencing January 14, 1885*, (Wheeling, WV: James B. Taney, Public Printer, 1885), 378.

³⁶⁴ B.W. Foster moved to Huntington in 1871 and opened a hardware store. Beyond his business ventures in private utilities, he helped start the Huntington Chamber of Commerce in 1895, and became the third president of the Huntington Land Company. Foster also married Marry Lenora Huntington, Collis P. Huntington’s niece. Don Daniel McMillian, *Huntington*, (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), pp. 44-45. Samuel Gideon moved to Huntington no later than 1872, and started a clothing store. A.B. Palmer, who resided in Huntington no later than 1872, operated a lumber yard, specializing in doors, sashes, and blinds. M. Wood White, *White’s New County and District Atlas of the State of West Virginia*, (Philadelphia: S.A. Mitchell Publishing, 1873), 58.

³⁶⁵ Thomas Parke Hughes, *Networks of Power: Electrification in Western Society, 1880-1930*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 2.

³⁶⁶ “Local Pickups,” *Weekly Register*, June 18, 1884.

³⁶⁷ “Through The State,” *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, October 31, 1884.

activities are scarce, but by the spring of 1885, the city's ambitions re-emerged in newspapers.

The *Wheeling Intelligencer* noted: "Huntington, this State, has an admirable electric light system.

All of her streets and public places are lighted with it and a majority of her stores. It is soon to be

introduced into the churches. In this matter, Huntington is far ahead of all other places in the

State."³⁶⁸ Two months later the paper noted, "The churches at Huntington, this State, are being

lighted with electric light. The electric light system in Huntington has proved a great success."³⁶⁹

By May 1885, Huntington seems to have provided electricity to most of the city.

Two historians of Huntington use a November 1886 *Huntington Advertiser* article to establish a date for the beginning of electricity in Huntington.³⁷⁰ This excerpt, in particular, is crucial to that dating:

The last of the electric lamps was put in position and connections made on Friday of last week, and the lights were turned on Friday night. The evening was dark and wet and the pedestrians who were picking their way over crossings and relieving their overcharged feelings by choice profanity, hailed with joy the sudden flash of 15 globes of electric fire, having a light equal in power to the light of 30,000 candles. —Owing to the imperfect connections and newness of machinery the lights burned fitfully and irregularly, many of them after burning a short time going out entirely. On each succeeding evening, the lights have grown steadier and brighter and in a short time a degree of perfection will be attained in the operation of the machinery that will give a light eminently satisfactory to the citizens of this enlightened city. —The people were almost unanimous in their commendations of the light and in their desire to the system extended throughout the city. With electric lights, water works assured, and the finest opera house in the state, all we need to rival New York in dignity and importance is an elevated railway and boodle aldermen.³⁷¹

As we have seen from April 1884 to May of 1885, Huntington Electric Lighting Company began to provide electricity to the city. Why, then, would local Huntington historians regard the

Advertiser article as establishing the first use of electricity in the city? The opening sentence

³⁶⁸ "Through The State," *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, March 19, 1885.

³⁶⁹ "Through The State," *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, May 20, 1885.

³⁷⁰ Wallace, *Cabell County Annals and Families*, 285; James E. Casto, *Towboat on the Ohio*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2015), 56.

³⁷¹ *Huntington Advertiser*, November 20, 1886, as cited in Wallace, *Cabell County Annals and Families*, 285.

seems to indicate that this was the city's first use of electricity. However, the article mentions that the lamps produce light equal to 30,000 candles and that the newness and imperfections of the lamps indicated a system still being worked out. In fact, what the *Advertiser* article highlights is the first use of arc lamps, a new source of lighting that urban centers rushed to implement for street lighting during the early to mid-1880s.³⁷²

In its October 1886 volume, the journal *Electrical World* reported on news regarding electricity in various regions of the United States. In the New England section appeared a pioneering Huntingtonian: "The Mather Company in Hartford, Connecticut, (their) Cincinnati agency sent a 25-arc light plant to Samuel Gideon, Huntington, W. Va."³⁷³ Clearly, the Huntington Electric Lighting Company had bought the arc lamp system. Local historians must have mistaken this latest advance for an initial offering, but clearly, November 20th, 1886, was not the first use of electricity in the city. Huntington had a well-established and functioning electric light system over a year earlier, by May 1885, well ahead of other urban areas in the State.

The "resources and aspirations" of society and technology Thomas Hughes mentioned intertwined in Huntington much as they did across the United States in the 1880s. The efforts put forth by ambitious Huntingtonians who initiated public works in the city set the stage for subsequent growth, as technological advances in electricity emerged. The new power source established competition with gas in the city. "The growing popularity of incandescent lighting for the illumination of interior spaces also threatened gas; worse yet for the gas interests, rapid stringing of electric lines to the periphery of each city portended elimination of future

³⁷² Tarr and Dupuy, *Technology and the Rise of the Networked City*, 230.

³⁷³ *Electric World: A Weekly Review of Current Progress in Electricity and its Applications*, Volumes VII-VIII, from Jan 2, 1886 to Dec. 25, 1886, (New York: W. J. Johnston, Publisher, 1886), 204.

markets.”³⁷⁴ New technological developments in manufacturing processes in gas provided lower rates that created fiercer competition between electricity and gas in the 1890s.³⁷⁵ Whether or not this is true of Huntington is hard to determine because rates for these utilities surely varied from their early beginnings compared to when viable customer bases were established.

Again, as with gas, electricity provision underwent corporate transformations. The Consolidated Light, Heat & Power Company, formed in 1892, primarily serviced Kenova, West Virginia until its operations expanded sometime in the nineteen-teens. The tenth annual report of the West Virginia Public Service Commission reported that “the company, incorporated July 14, 1892, under the laws of West Virginia, furnishes electric light and power to Huntington, Kenova, and Ceredo, West Virginia.”³⁷⁶ Huntington city directories confirm these changes in electricity providers between 1910 and 1920.³⁷⁷

Huntington electrified ahead of Wheeling and Charleston. Wheeling, no longer the capital city, introduced electricity in 1887 via the Wheeling Electrical Company.³⁷⁸ Likewise, Charleston, now the capital city, got its electricity from the Kanawha Electric Light Company, which received its charter on 20 November 1885,³⁷⁹ though the company did not provide electricity for lighting purposes in Charleston until 1887.³⁸⁰ The city of Huntington was two

³⁷⁴ Rose, *Cities of Light and Heat*, 28.

³⁷⁵ Rose, *Cities of Light and Heat*, 28.

³⁷⁶ *State of West Virginia Public Service Commission*, First Annual Report, (Charleston, WV: West Virginia Public Service Commission, 1915), 416. This report lists that the Consolidated Light, Heat & Power Company’s generating station was in Kenova, W. VA., and had a capacity of 20,400 kilowatts.

³⁷⁷ See *Huntington, West Virginia City Directory 1910*, (Pittsburgh: R. L. Polk & Company, 1910), 17; *Huntington, West Virginia City Directory 1918*, (Pittsburgh: R. L. Polk & Company, 1918), 23; *Huntington, West Virginia City Directory 1920*, (Pittsburgh: R. L. Polk & Company, 1920), 25.

³⁷⁸ *Laws and Ordinances for the Government of the City of Wheeling, West Virginia*, (Wheeling, W.VA.: Intelligencer Publishing Company, 1901), 466. The Wheeling Electrical Company received its charter July 14, 1887.

³⁷⁹ *Acts of the Legislature of West Virginia at its Eighteenth Session*, (Wheeling, W. VA.: James B. Taney, Public Printer, 1885), 504-505.

³⁸⁰ See Otis K. Rice, *Charleston and the Kanawha Valley: An Illustrated History*, (Woodland Hills: Windsor Publications, 1981), 57. Rice did not provide a reason for why a two-year gap between the Kanawha Electric Light Company received its charter and was able to provide electricity to Charleston.

years ahead of the other two major urban centers in West Virginia, testimony to the foresight and entrepreneurship of some of the city's businessmen, whose efforts yielded the most modern city in the State.

While lighting was a major element of electrification, other uses soon emerged, including electric streetcars.³⁸¹ By 1887 the Huntington Electric Lighting Company changed its name to the Huntington Electric Light & Street Railway Company and operated its streetcar line.³⁸² As with the natural competition between gas and electricity in Huntington, competition in streetcars occurred as well. The Huntington Belt Railway Company, organized in 1890 merged with the Huntington Electric Light & Street Railway in 1892, and the two companies then reorganized as the Consolidated Light and Railway Company, which continued to provide the city with electricity, maintained and expanded the streetcar network.³⁸³ The next section of this chapter, though slightly out of chronological order, focuses on the emergence of electric streetcars in Huntington.

³⁸¹ Streetcars will receive explicit attention in the next section. Since they were connected to early electric companies, however, they bear brief mentioning here.

³⁸² West Virginia Legislature, *Acts of the West Virginia Legislature at its Nineteenth Regular Session, 1889*, 511.

³⁸³ The Huntington Belt Line was incorporated on October 08, 1890. West Virginia Legislature, *Acts of the Legislature of West Virginia at its Twentieth Regular Session Commencing January 14, 1891*, (Charleston, W.VA.: Moses W. Donnally, Public Printer, 1891), 1552-1553.

IT'S MUDDY HERE, BUT WE HAVE ELECTRIC STREETCARS

History tells a story of walking, riding horses, and eventually traveling in trains as the evolution of transportation before the automobile and airplane. In the early nineteenth century, Americans began exploring methods of transportation beyond walking, horses, and trains to navigate the cityscape. Historian Todd Timmons discusses the early origins and crucial role mass transit played in urban-America: “The idea of mass transit in the United States dates back to the early part of the nineteenth century when several cities began using large horse-drawn coaches, called omnibuses, to transport passengers between predetermined locations.”³⁸⁴ Following the first omnibus lines in 1827 New York City, the horse-drawn rail carts spread to cities across the country. In the subsequent decades, various models of streetcars were developed, including cable cars, still in use in San Francisco.³⁸⁵ Some inventors attempted to perfect battery-operated streetcars, hoping to replace the cable car, but they were not successful due to poor performances and technical deficits.³⁸⁶

³⁸⁴ Todd Timmons, *Science And Technology In Nineteenth-Century America*, (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2005), 34.

³⁸⁵ Timmons, *Science And Technology*, 34. The cable car, patented by Andrew Hallidie in 1871, operated using a buried cable, pulled through a continuous loop, powered by large steam engines.

³⁸⁶ Timmons, *Science And Technology*, 34-35. Streetcars powered by batteries proved inefficient because the batteries were cumbersome and provided only a few hours of operation. Also, the batteries needed frequent charging that required greater time than actually powering the streetcars.



First electric streetcar in Huntington, 1888. Photograph courtesy of West Virginia & Regional History Collection.

Experiments with electric streetcars surfaced in the early 1880s, looking to surpass cable cars as the primary mode of urban mass transportation. “The basic idea for an electric trolley had been around since the early 1800s, although some inventors had little more than an idea, whereas others built actual working models.”³⁸⁷ David Nye discusses how elements of the cable car and battery-operated cars each had appealing features, but various models of electric streetcars in the early 1880s showed more promising attributes, though they still lacked practical and efficient means of transportation:

³⁸⁷ Timmons, *Science And Technology*, 34-35.

All of these systems were attractive because they eliminated batteries and relied on improved dynamos. Collectively they solved problems of where to mount the motor (under the car), how to transmit electricity to it (overhead wires, using a trolley), and what kinds of brakes, driving mechanisms, and operator controls worked. Nevertheless, most of these systems soon went out of operation because no one had combined all these elements in a single system, and because none of the existing systems had a satisfactory motor.³⁸⁸

It was Frank J. Sprague, an inventor who had worked with Thomas Edison, who solved these problems. Sprague constructed a successful electric streetcar network in Richmond, Virginia in 1887 and “by 1890 roughly 200 cities had built or ordered streetcar systems, about 90 percent of those systems were based on Sprague’s patents.”³⁸⁹ However, in 1888, Huntington looked to Sidney H. Short, “a University of Denver physics professor for its streetcar system.”³⁹⁰

In 1885, Short “constructed an electric streetcar line at the University of Denver that operated on a three-thousand-foot track. The car received power through a mid-track slot, instead of an overhead wire.”³⁹¹ After implementing his electric streetcar system in Denver, Short resigned from the University of Denver and installed his streetcar system in several cities.³⁹² St. Louis, MO; Columbus, Ohio, and Huntington implemented the Short electric streetcar system.³⁹³ Though Short’s system in Denver operated without overhead cables, the system he implemented in Huntington reflected a newer design that utilized overhead wires, but with a safer distribution of electricity. Short stated that his streetcar system differed from other models and used two overhead wires:

³⁸⁸ Nye, *Electrifying America*, 88.

³⁸⁹ Nye, *Electrifying America*, 89.

³⁹⁰ Rose, *Cities Of Light And Heat*, 25.

³⁹¹ Gunther Paul Barth, *Instant Cities: Urbanization And The Rise Of San Francisco And Denver*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 224.

³⁹² George Derby and James Terry White, *National Cyclopedia of American Biography*, Volume XIII, (New York: James T White & Company, 1906), 247.

³⁹³ *Electrical Engineering: A Weekly Journal Of Electrical Engineering*, Volume II, July 6, 1888, to December 28, 1888. London: Charles & Co., 1888. 333.

The two wires are cut into sections so arranged that each section receives power only for operating the cars upon it. If there is no car on any one section, there is no power in the wires of that section to injure persons or animals. There is no electricity on the rail, as I consider that dangerous to life and property. All our power is retained 20 feet above the ground. A fallen wire can be handled without receiving a shock.³⁹⁴

Huntington had the benefit of being in the early stages of establishing technological networks.

Therefore, the city did not experience the problems larger cities dealt with regarding webs of overhead telegraph, telephone, and electric-lighting wires that cluttered cityscapes and presented a source of potential danger.³⁹⁵ While preparing for an electric streetcar system, Huntington relied on horse-drawn streetcars as a mode of urban transportation.³⁹⁶ The Short System gave Huntington a safe and efficient streetcar system that had a speed of twelve miles per hour.³⁹⁷

As previously mentioned, the Huntington Electric Lighting Company amended its charter in June 1888, and changed its name to the Huntington Electric Light & Street Railway Company, indicating its entry into the streetcar business. The *Shepherdstown Register* reported in July 1888 that “a street-car line is in operation at Huntington.”³⁹⁸ By December of that year, the *Wheeling Intelligencer* reported the streetcar news from Huntington:

The long talked about street cars will soon be a reality in Huntington. The cars are here, and beautiful cars they are; the track is completed from Seventh Street to Guyandotte, a distance of four miles; the wires are all up; and the only thing that remains to be done is the arrangement of the dynamo. Prof. Short, the electrician of Chicago, whose system will be used here, and who is here to superintend the closing work, says that the cars will be running by Wednesday of this week.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁴ George Worthington, “A Promising New Company,” *Electrical Review*, Vol. 14, No. 25, (August 1889), 20.

³⁹⁵ Eric Shatzberg, “Culture and Technology in the City: Opposition to Mechanized Street Transportation in Late-Nineteenth-Century America,” in Agatha C. Hughes, Michael Thad Allen and Gabrielle Hecht, *Technologies Of Power: Essays In Honor Of Thomas Parke Hughes And Agatha Chipley Hughes*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 64.

³⁹⁶ *Poor's Directory of Railway Officials and Manual of American Street Railways, Containing Lists of all the Railroads in Operation in the Western Hemisphere*, Edition of August 1890, Fifth Annual Number, (New York: Published by Poor's Manual of Railroads, 1890), 1241. This is the only reference to horse-drawn streetcars in Huntington; logically speaking, horse-drawn streetcars were in use before their electric counterparts.

³⁹⁷ Fred H. Whipple, “Early Attempts At Electrical Propulsion: With Roads Now In Operation,” *Electric Railway* (Detroit: 1889), 132.

³⁹⁸ *Shepherdstown Register*, July 13, 1888.

³⁹⁹ “Huntington News,” *Wheeling Intelligencer*, December 11, 1888.

Local Historian George Wallace cites the city's system as "the second electric car line in the world."⁴⁰⁰ More recently, another local historian, James Casto repeated that claim.⁴⁰¹

Many historians cite Richmond, Virginia, as the first city to have an electric streetcar system.⁴⁰² Even within West Virginia, Wheeling eclipsed Huntington by seven months, introducing electric streetcars in May 1888. The *Wheeling Intelligencer* reported:

This morning the electrical street cars will start to run from the stables of the Citizen's Railway Company on Forty-Second Street to the present northern terminus of the Wheeling Railway Company's track at Tenth-street on Main. The cars will run over the Citizen's line from Forty-Second Street to Twenty-seventh, and thence over the new company's track to Main Street and on Main to Tenth. The connection between the two companies track at Twenty-Seventh Street was made this week, and the poles and wires are all up from there south to Forty-second.⁴⁰³

Even if Huntington's system was not the second in the nation, it seems very likely that by establishing electric streetcars in 1888, Wheeling and Huntington were among the first five cities in America to have such systems.

The 1889 Sanborn maps of Huntington reveal information that is not available in other primary sources, indicating the location of the Huntington Electric Light & Street Railway station, several engines, and the amount of horsepower for each engine.⁴⁰⁴ The map notes that four dynamos were housed at the Fourth Avenue shop with an 80 horsepower and 150 horsepower engines.⁴⁰⁵ The trade magazine *Poor's Directory of Railway Officials and Manual of*

⁴⁰⁰ Wallace, *Cabell County Annals and Families*, 274.

⁴⁰¹ James Casto, "Streetcars Helped City Grow," *Herald-Dispatch*, March 29, 2009.

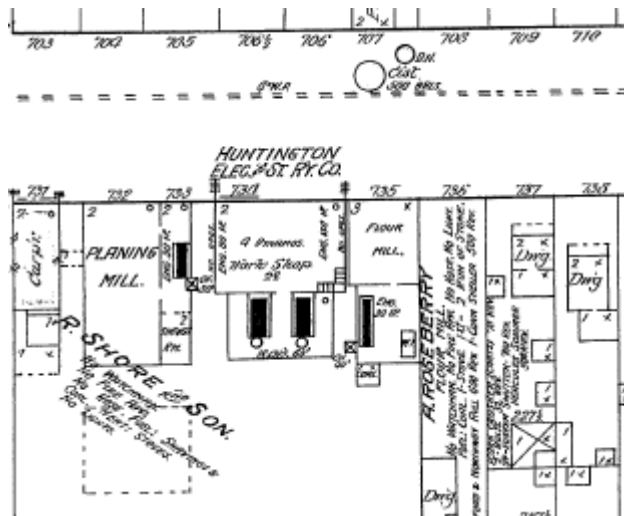
⁴⁰² Nye, *Electrifying America*: 87-88. See also, Todd Timmons, *Science and Technology in Nineteenth-century America*, 35.

⁴⁰³ "The Electric Railway," *Wheeling Intelligencer*, May 12, 1888.

⁴⁰⁴ The Huntington Electric Light & Street Railway Company was located on Fourth Avenue. In 1928 the location became the site of one of only eight atmospheric theatres designed by Thomas L. Lamb. The Keith-Albee Theatre named in honor of the famous Keith-Albee vaudeville circuit, is still currently in operation. See <http://www.keithalbee.com/history/>. See picture on next page.

⁴⁰⁵ Sanborn Map Company. Huntington and Guyandotte, West Virginia, February 1889. Scale 50ft to one inch, (New York, NY: Sanborn Map & Publishing Company, 1889), Sheet 3.

American Street Railways provides further information about the first electric streetcar system in Huntington.



The Huntington Electric Light & Street Railway Station, 1889. Located on Fourth Avenue.

The directory states, “Main line 4 miles; gauge, 4 ‘ft. 8 ½ in.: rail 25lbs.”⁴⁰⁶ Likewise, in the first year of the street railway’s operation, *Poor’s* listed that “Huntington carried 292,000 passengers.” The Huntington Electric Light & Street Railway apparently did not earn a profit; *Poor’s* listed a breakdown of earnings, cost, and capital stock:

Passenger earnings was listed at \$12,680; electric light department, \$12,950—total, \$23,630. Expenses and taxes, \$16,860. Net earnings, \$6,770. Capital stock, \$80,000; unfunded debt, \$7,500—total, \$87,500. *Contra*: Cost of road and equipment, \$55,000; electric light plant, \$39,270—total, \$94,270.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁶ *Poor’s Directory*, 1241.

⁴⁰⁷ *Poor’s Directory*, 1241.

Even as the Huntington Electric Light & Street Railway Company struggled to make a profit in 1890, another company took an interest in starting an alternative streetcar line in the city.

The Huntington Belt Railway Company was granted its charter in 1890.⁴⁰⁸ By 1892, the Huntington Belt Railway had “four miles of track, all of which were electric.”⁴⁰⁹ As for the Huntington Electric Light & Street Railway Company, running both horse and electric cars in 1892, had “eleven miles of tracks of which five miles were horse and six miles were electric.”⁴¹⁰ With two streetcar companies in the city with a combined total of ten miles of electric streetcar lines and five miles of horse-drawn streetcar lines, Huntington had a strong network of urban transportation. In June 1892, the two streetcar companies merged and reorganized as the Consolidated Light & Street Railway Company.⁴¹¹ Notable Huntington pioneers such as Delos W. Emmons and B. W. Foster were shareholders of the Consolidated Light & Street Railway Company.⁴¹² The Consolidated Light & Street Railway Company continued to serve Huntington even though the company was absorbed into the Ohio Valley Electric Railway Company in 1899, which expanded and connected streetcar lines from Huntington to Westmoreland, Ceredo, Kenova, all the way to Catlettsburg, Kentucky.⁴¹³

The trade journal *Electrical World and Engineer* noted the rise of the Ohio Valley Electric Railway Company in 1899: “An eastern syndicate has purchased the electric railways of

⁴⁰⁸ West Virginia Legislature, *Acts of the Legislature of West Virginia, Twentieth Regular Session Commencing January 14, 1891*. (Charleston, W.VA.: Moses W. Donnally, Public Printer, 1891), 1552-1553.

⁴⁰⁹ “Directory of Street Railways,” *Street Railway Journal*, Volume VII, January 1892, XI, 497.

⁴¹⁰ “Directory of Street Railways.” 497.

⁴¹¹ “Charters Granted,” *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, July 15, 1892.

⁴¹² West Virginia Legislature, *Acts Of The Legislature Of West Virginia At Its Twenty-First Regular And Extra Sessions*, (Charleston, WV: Mosses W. Donnally Public Printer, 1893), 214. Rufus Switzer was also a shareholder in the company, who became mayor in 1909 and created the city’s first municipal park, Ritter Park. See Wallace, *Cabell County Annals And Families*, 525.

⁴¹³ *State Of West Virginia Public Service Commission*, First Annual Report (Charleston, WV: West Virginia Public Service Commission, 1915), 193.

Ironton, Ohio; Catlettsburg and Ashland, Kentucky: Central City and Huntington, W. Va.

Connecting links will be made which will give a continual street car service along the Ohio River for a distance of 40 miles.”⁴¹⁴ Just as the Huntington Electric Light & Street Railway Company and the Huntington Belt Line consolidated in 1892, “the streetcar service of Huntington Electric Light & Street Railway was consolidated into the Camden Inter-State Railway Company through the Ohio Valley Electric Company on January 02, 1901.”⁴¹⁵ The rearrangement of companies providing electric streetcars in the city expanded its network, helping the city grow.

Geographic boundaries of Huntington facilitated the population from the 1870s to the early 1900s, as the *Herald-Dispatch* noted: “Because the city was so vast there was no real need for real estate subdivisions until after the turn of the century.” As the population in Huntington rapidly grew, the need for geographic expansion enabled the opening of the Highlawn District and the South Side. Additionally, whereas Ritter Park is traditionally considered the first suburban area of the city, Walnut Hills was quickly settled by affluent residents in 1903, thus creating the city’s first suburban area. By the nineteen-teens construction of residential homes throughout the South Side began, as R.S. Douthat recalled: “that he used to pick apples from trees in an orchard overlooking Ritter Park many years ago and look out over the city where there was not a single residence south of the railroad tracks in the space now known as the South Side.”⁴¹⁶

Huntington’s streetcars facilitated growth and resulted in three suburban areas that accommodated the city’s population increase in the early 1900s.

Historian Kenneth T. Jackson states that “the electric streetcar, and the land developers who were so quick to take advantage of its possibilities, had created a new kind of metropolis by 1900, one that was very different from the walking city.”⁴¹⁷ As Huntington grew, electric

⁴¹⁴ *Electrical World And Engineer: A Weekly Review of Current Progress In Electricity And Its Practical Applications*, Volume XXXIV, From July 01 to December 30, 1899, (New York: Electrical World And Engineer Publishing, 1899), 638.

⁴¹⁵ *American Street Railway Investments: Issued Annually In Connection With The Street Railway Journal*, (New York: Kean, Van Cortland & Company, 1907), 425.

⁴¹⁶ Brooks Bryant, “A Cartographic History of Huntington, West Virginia, 1871-1903” (2016). *Manuscripts*. 7. http://mds.marshall.edu/lib_manu/7. Pp. 18-19.

⁴¹⁷ Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 137.

streetcars helped further open the city beyond its downtown constraints. The city's population increased significantly from 11,923 in 1900 to 50,177 by 1920, and physical expansion facilitated by a vast streetcar system was a major factor in accommodating the population boost.⁴¹⁸ Streetcars served Huntington's mass transit needs throughout the 1920s and into the Great Depression until buses replaced all electric streetcars in 1937.⁴¹⁹

I DON'T DRINK MUDDY WATER

Post-Civil War American cities faced significant problems with increases in immigration and urbanization, such as the spread of disease and fires. In turn, because of the shock city dwellers experienced from disease outbreaks and fires, citywide water supply systems seemed the remedy.⁴²⁰ Huntington's location along the Ohio River gave it a source of easily accessible water. Historian John Duffy discusses the problems that nineteenth-century America dealt with regarding water pollution and sanitation:

In the post-Civil War years, the development of sewer systems that poured human wastes directly into adjacent lakes and rivers—the usual source of local water supply—made water pollution a major problem by the 1880s and 1890s. Along with being a collecting point for sewage, these same water bodies were convenient receptacles for industrial wastes, garbage, dead animals, and any other refuse.⁴²¹

⁴¹⁸ Richard L Forstall, *Population of States and Counties of the United States, 1790-1990*. (Washington, D.C.: Department of Commerce, U.S. Bureau of the Census Population Division, 1996, Part II), 177.

⁴¹⁹ Wallace, *Cabell County Annals & Families*, 276-278.

⁴²⁰ Letty Anderson, "Fire and Disease: The Development of Water Supply Systems in New England, 1870-1900," in Joel A. Tarr and Gabriel Dupuy, *Technology And The Rise Of The Networked City In Europe and America*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 137.

⁴²¹ John Duffy, *The Sanitarians: A History of American Public Health*, (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 176.

Huntington's earliest water system included cisterns throughout the city for drinking water and fire protection. Though the river was right there, we can speculate that collected rainwater was purer than Ohio River water in the early 1870s.

By the mid-1880s, efforts to modernize Huntington's water infrastructure gathered motion. Though pioneering Huntingtonians fostered the local natural gas and electricity supply, water was an area of public works started by outsiders. In 1886, a group of businessmen from Pennsylvania and Indiana organized the Huntington Water Company. The Huntington Water Company installed filtration systems supplied by the Hyatt Pure Water Systems Company of New York to alleviate the problems of the muddy and polluted Ohio River. As with gas and electricity networks, primary sources regarding Huntington's water system are scarce, although Sanborn fire insurance maps from 1889 and the 1890s illustrate the growing water network in the city. Because absentee interests formed the first water company in Huntington, the municipal government secured an agreement that put it in a position to take control of the company, and take full responsibility of public works for the first time in the city's brief history.

William S. Kuhn and his associates' water company received its charter on December 24, 1886,

for the purpose of building, constructing, maintaining, operating and owning water works within the present and future limits of the city of Huntington, of supplying the said city of Huntington, and the inhabitants thereof with water for domestic, manufacturing, sanitary and fire purposes; of laying down pipes and water mains for the purpose of conveying water through the streets, avenues and alleys within the present and future limits of said city, of acquiring and holding as by law authorized any and all real estate, easements and water rights necessary of receiving, storing, purifying, conducting and distributing water through said city.⁴²²

⁴²² *Acts of the Legislature of West Virginia at its Eighteenth Regular Session*, (Charleston, W.V.: Moses W. Donnally, Public Printer, 1887), 517-518.

Huntington's municipal government stipulated that: "the plant should be in successful operation before the last day of December 1887, and "this imposed an obligation on the grantee that gave the city the right to purchase the plant upon the terms therein set out."⁴²³ The Huntington Water Company held up its end of the deal and was operating within the time limit.⁴²⁴

Historian Letty Anderson discusses an important aspect regarding investments in water supply systems and smaller urban areas:

Investments in water supplies were minimal in 1800; they grew very slowly and relatively steadily until the 1870s and 1880s, when there was an apparent boom in water supply investments. A breakdown of this investment pattern by cities indicated that the earliest cities to install central water supply systems were large and had had severe problems of epidemics and fires. The cities that composed the investment boom of the 1870s and 1880s were smaller and probably were not faced with the severe problems to which the earlier cities had responded directly.⁴²⁵

Huntington certainly fits this pattern.

In March 1888, the *Wheeling Intelligencer* published a special edition focusing on promoting the State, opining that: "The fifty-four counties of West Virginia arrayed in detail make a remarkable showing for a young State whose development has only begun."⁴²⁶ Naturally, West Virginia's three most populated cities discuss their best attributes within their respective articles. Huntington's discussion of its growing economy, jobs, and modernization emphasized its public works: "Huntington has a fine water works and electric lights, and a good fire department."⁴²⁷ The entries for Kanawha County (Charleston), and Ohio County (Wheeling)

⁴²³ Wallace, *Cabell County Annals and Families*, 279.

⁴²⁴ Wallace, *Cabell County Annals and Families*, 279.

⁴²⁵ Tarr and Dupuy, *Technology And The Rise Of The Networked City In Europe And America*, 137.

⁴²⁶ "State By Counties," *Wheeling Intelligencer*, March 31, 1888. The newspaper stated that whenever is has been possible a well-known citizen of the county has been induced to write the article, and where leave was given the writer's name is signed. The general mass of material was so great that many excellent articles had to be greatly reduced. In other cases, meagre returns from good counties will explain any seeming neglect. Unfortunately, the article for Cabell County did not have a signatory.

⁴²⁷ "State By Counties, Cabell County," *Wheeling Intelligencer*, March 31, 1888.

does not refer to any public works. The Wheeling Intelligencer article, “State By Counties,” is the first newspaper reference to Huntington’s water system.

Huntington’s location along the Ohio River made the river the most sensible option for its municipal source of water. Studies of the river in the early 1890s, though, confirmed its hazardous conditions.⁴²⁸ It is probable that the Huntington Water Company, the municipal government, and residents were aware of the river’s condition. John Duffy provides an excellent illustration of how people living along it treated the Ohio River:

The pollution of the Ohio River—the water source for most of the towns and cities on its banks and tributaries—became a major problem. The Ohio State Board of Health reported in 1891 that nearly all towns on the Ohio River discharged their sewage into the river and drew their water supply from it as well. It also noted that in many cases the sewage outlet and the water intake were close together.⁴²⁹

Certainly, people using the Ohio River as a source of water understood the inadequate quality of the muddy and polluted river. Duffy also noted that “a legislative study of water pollution on the Ohio River confirmed the worst fears that the Ohio was literally becoming an open sewer.”⁴³⁰

Historian Chad Montrie points out that: “During the nineteenth century, the perceived threat that industrial and human sewage posed to peoples’ health was amplified by the way they understood disease.”⁴³¹ By the mid to late 1880s, historian Nancy Tomes contends, “experimentalists in Europe, Japan, and the United States succeeded in turning germ theory from debatable hypothesis into accepted scientific fact.”⁴³² The Huntington Water Company certainly recognized the need to provide purified water to its customers, because the city required the

⁴²⁸ The Guyandotte River, a tributary of the Ohio River also offered a close source of water for municipal purposes, but primary sources suggest there were no interests in the river as a water source.

⁴²⁹ Duffy, *The Sanitarians*, 176.

⁴³⁰ Duffy, *The Sanitarians*, 176.

⁴³¹ Chad Montrie, *A People’s History of Environmentalism in the United States*, (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011), 31.

⁴³² Nancy Tomes, *The Gospel of Germs: Men, Women, and the Microbe in American Life*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 93.

implementation of a water filtration system as part of the water company's charter.⁴³³

Huntington's municipal government's requirement of a filtration system illustrates an astute understanding of pollution in the Ohio River.

By 1888, the Huntington Water Company provided the city with filtered and purified water despite some possible delays. A letter from W.S. Kuhn (Huntington Water Company shareholder) to the editor of the *Engineering News & American Railway Journal* provides more details about the water company:

We note in your late issue an item stating that there is some question about the Huntington water-works being accepted, having failed at their test. The facts are that we had a very successful test in January. Our pump capacity is almost double the franchise requirements, and is in good shape. The difficulty has been that in the recent high water in the Ohio river we have had trouble to keep our suction pipes open and free from sand which will necessitate some changes in our method of taking water from the river; these changes will be made as soon as the river falls. We have kept the town fully protected all the while, and have put out all the fires they have had promptly and to the satisfaction of everybody: and so far, we have discovered no dissatisfaction with the water works in any respect.⁴³⁴

Also of interest, Kuhn mentions that the Huntington Water Company was a franchise of the American Water Works & Guarantee Company; as of 2018, the company is simply known as American Water.⁴³⁵

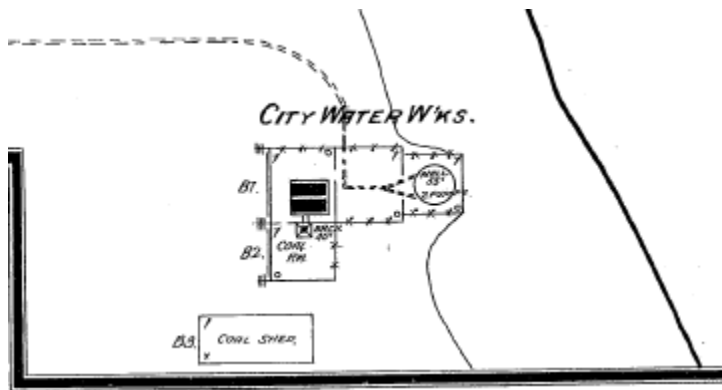
The 1889 Sanborn maps provide a breakdown of the Huntington Water Company's network that supplements information missing from its charter, newspapers, and city records. The map illustrates a portion of downtown Huntington from Second Avenue to Fourth Avenue from Eighth Street to Tenth Street, indicating that the main water pipes were laid in a grid pattern

⁴³³ *Acts of the Legislature of West Virginia at its Eighteenth Regular Session*, 518.

⁴³⁴ George H. Frost, *Engineering News & American Railway Journal*, Volume XIX, (April 1888), 326.

⁴³⁵ History of American Water. <http://pr.amwater.com/Company/history.cfm>.

with avenues and streets.⁴³⁶ The maps also differentiate from main pipes (eight inches) and secondary pipes (six inches). The map shows the Huntington Water Company plant was situated near the Ensign Car Factory on Third Avenue and Twentieth Street.⁴³⁷ The 1889 Sanborn maps for Huntington show the initial growth of the city's water network. The next series of Sanborn maps for Huntington from 1893 indicate a steady completion of the city's water pipe network.⁴³⁸ Five years later, the Sanborn maps show a completed network of water pipes.⁴³⁹



City Water Works, 1889. Located at Twentieth-Street & Third Avenue.

Naturally, towns and cities located along the Ohio River experienced water quality problems because of the river's pollution. An editorial from 1890 discussed Wheeling's water troubles and indicated that Huntington had bypassed their water troubles because they installed

⁴³⁶ Sanborn Map Company. Huntington and Guyandotte, West Virginia, February 1889. Scale 50ft to one inch, (New York, NY: Sanborn Map & Publishing Company, 1889). Sheets 3-4.

⁴³⁷ Sanborn Map Company. Huntington and Guyandotte, 1889. Sheets 3-4.

⁴³⁸ Sanborn Map Company. Huntington, Guyandotte, and Central City, West Virginia, March 1893. Scale 50ft to one inch, (New York, NY: Sanborn Map & Publishing Company, 1893). Sheets 2-11.

⁴³⁹ Sanborn Map Company. Huntington, Central City, Guyandotte, and Ceredo, West Virginia, November 1898. Scale 50ft to one inch, (New York, NY: Sanborn Map & Publishing Company, 1898). Sheets 2-20.

the Hyatt Pure Water System.⁴⁴⁰ The industrial work that took place in towns and cities along the Ohio River from the 1870s to the 1890s heavily polluted the river, already naturally muddy. The changing ecosystem of the Ohio River led to a troubling conclusion, reached in the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) survey of the river in 1908, as noted by historian Leland R. Johnson's history of the Huntington USACE District:

H. Horton of the U.S. Geological Survey said in 1908 the flow of the Ohio River at low water stages was only about a fifth of the flow required to render the raw sewage entering the river inoffensive, asserted the river was no longer suitable for use as a municipal water supply, and urged enactment of corrective federal legislation.⁴⁴¹

Despite this assessment, the river remained the city's source of water and still does to the present day.

The Huntington Water Company was one of many subsidiaries of the American Water Works & Guarantee Company that built water supply systems for municipalities.⁴⁴² The Huntington Water Company provided the city's water needs until 1917 when it consolidated with the Guyandotte Water Works Company through the American Water Works & Electric Company, incorporated 24 May 1917.⁴⁴³ The newly consolidated water works operated as the Huntington Water Corporation as listed in the 1918 city directory.⁴⁴⁴ Just as Huntington was ahead of the curve regarding electricity in West Virginia, the young city was ahead of other urban areas in the state concerning filtered and purified public water. By 1888, Huntington could

⁴⁴⁰ "Ohio River Water," *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, August 15, 1890.

⁴⁴¹ Leland R. Johnson, *Men, Mountains and Rivers: An Illustrated History of the Huntington District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1754-1974*, (Washington D.C.: Superintendent of Documents, United States Government Printing Office, 1977), 264.

⁴⁴² H. J. Gonden, "An Old and Successful Water Company," *Public Service*, Volume V, No. V (November 1908): 154-155.

⁴⁴³ John Moody, *Moody's Analyses of Investments*, (New York: Press of Publishers Printing Company, 1918), 1230. In 1947, American Water Works divested itself of their electric power business and began buying and selling small water companies that led to the formation of American Water. See Neil S. Grigg, *Water Finance: Public Responsibilities and Private Opportunities*, (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), 257.

⁴⁴⁴ *Huntington, West Virginia City Directory 1918*, (Pittsburgh: R. L. Polk & Company, 1918), 304.

boast of natural gas, electricity, electric streetcars, and filtered and purified running water; all that remained in Huntington's quest for urban modernity were sewers and paved streets.

WE CRY FOR HELP

In the late nineteenth century, Americans grew increasingly dependent on the new technological features of modern cities: gas, electricity, water, and electric streetcars generally improved life and mobility. Telegraphs and telephones streamlined communication and news, giving people greater access to the larger world, but some impediments regarding urban modernity temporarily slowed progress. Sewerage and street paving, possibly two of the most important aspects of public works in American cities, remained a crucial hurdle for many smaller cities heading into the 1890s.⁴⁴⁵ Historian Martin V. Melosi points out that the “development of elaborate technical networks in the nineteenth century was a prime characteristic of the modern city.”⁴⁴⁶ Huntington, on the edge of completing vital public works, was about to encounter trouble with progress from an internal source.

Before discussing sewerage and street paving, it is important to discuss the sources briefly, and how this section differs from the previous segments of this chapter. Primary sources concerning street paving and sewerage in Huntington's early history are scarce. Sanborn maps, some existing municipal records, financial journals, and magazines help fill in the gap, however. Another different aspect of this section is that sewerage and street paving are closely related. Huntington installed trunk sewers and subsequently paved streets where the sewers were installed; it makes little sense to pave without installing sewers first. Lastly, dates are imprecise

⁴⁴⁵ Goldfield, *Encyclopedia of American Urban History*, 382.

⁴⁴⁶ Martin V. Melosi, *The Sanitary City: Environmental Services in Urban America from Colonial Times to the Present*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008), 2.

at best, and so dates for sewerage and street paving fall under ranges of years. With that said, Huntington began the process of adding sewers and paving its streets in 1890.

Huntington experienced problems common to American cities in the late-nineteenth century regarding financing, and implementation of sewerage and street paving. Melosi highlights the governmental web concerning public works, certainly relevant to Huntington at that time:

The infrastructure, various technical systems, and sanitary services came to represent public goods, and thus required municipal—and later state and federal—commitments to increased public spending. Yet problems of equity and discrimination—in terms of who made decisions and who received the services—persisted throughout the history of the American city. Favoritism, corruption, personal aggrandizement, and greed often thwarted rational decision making.⁴⁴⁷

By 1890, Huntington's growth transformed what had been a fairly clean railroad town into a small dirty city that fostered public attempts to find a remedy. The changing environment in Huntington led residents to challenge the political environment and thus set the stage for the final act in the city's quest for urban modernity.

As Huntington entered the 1890s, the city still had muddy streets and lacked a modern sewer system. A sense of urgency arose among residents about sanitary conditions, health problems, and proper street drainage.⁴⁴⁸ Up to this point, the municipal government paid for a minimal portion of public works in Huntington.⁴⁴⁹ Gas, water, electricity, and streetcars were all implemented by private businesses. Largely considered an obstacle to paved streets, the Central Land Company attempted to gain tax-exempt status in exchange for paving the city's streets.

⁴⁴⁷ Melosi, *The Sanitary City*, 3.

⁴⁴⁸ "Street Paving," *Huntington Advertiser*, April 30, 1890.

⁴⁴⁹ "City Council Minutes," *Huntington Advertiser*, December 06, 1884, shows the first indication that city council took responsibility for public works in Huntington, mainly the maintenance of gas street lights mentioned in the previous section.

The *Huntington Advertiser* noted the poor condition of the city's streets in the Spring of 1890, noting that: "It is likely that some attempt will be made during the present Summer to remedy these matters, and it is not impossible that in our haste and desperation city council may do what we wish before a year has passed."⁴⁵⁰ City council's actions reflect a larger nineteenth-century trend of how municipal governments assumed a minimal role in public works: "By the late nineteenth century, cities began to take over some paving functions for health reasons (to reduce standing water and improve drainage), but they continued to assess abutting property owners for a portion or all of the paving cost."⁴⁵¹ As historian John C. Teaford points out, city governments with low populations were wary of paying for public works such as street paving due to their high costs.⁴⁵²

Huntington residents still dealt with poor drainage that led to outbreaks of malaria. They wrote to the *Huntington Advertiser* and voiced their concerns about the increased health problems derived from pools of stagnant water and no street drainage. A July 1890 *Huntington Advertiser* illustrates a shifting role of advocacy from residents to the newspaper. The editorial, highlighting the complete lack of street drainage and sewerage in Huntington, noted,

It is a fact no longer attempted to be concealed that this city's condition in regard to general healthfulness is in a very bad way. It is not disputed that the prime cause of the general malarial affection [sic] is due to the inefficient drainage system, or rather, no drainage system at all. It is patent to all that stagnant pools and ponds of water are numerous and that they are the breeders of all the germs of fever and malaria which thoroughly impregnate the atmosphere. The attention of the *Huntington Advertiser* has repeatedly been called to these malarial cess-pools, and in turn this paper now wishes to call the attention of whatever authority, that may suggest or effect a remedy to them. It is true that sewer building is going on at a reasonably rapid rate now, but the sewers will count for nothing if small drains from the green-covered pools to the sewers are not built

⁴⁵⁰ "Street Paving," *Huntington Advertiser*, April 30, 1890.

⁴⁵¹ Eran Ben-Joseph and Terry S. Szold, *Regulating Place: Standards and the Shaping of Urban America*, (New York: Routledge Press, 2005), 143.

⁴⁵² John C. Teaford, *The Unheralded Triumph, City Government in America, 1870-1900*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 227.

and give us such freedom from impure and disease-impregnated air as is possible. At least some effort looking to the clearing away of the pools should be made. If the council is not responsible it can show the people so by doing something in the line suggested. — Quinine is not harmful, probably, but it is hard to take, and if the cause for its use can be removed it should be done at once.⁴⁵³

The editorial raises many questions, specifically; why was the city council considered not responsible for the quality and condition of streets in Huntington? How severe were the outbreaks of malaria since quinine was recommended? All in all, the drainage problem more than likely correlated to the city council's unwillingness to pay for street paving and drainage while sewers were being built.

Huntington began the process of installing sewerage that started in the heart of downtown. As listed in Sewer Block Map 21 from the Huntington Sanitary Board, the first trunk sewers were installed from east to west, Tenth Street to Seventh Street, and from north to south from Seventh Avenue to Second Avenue.⁴⁵⁴ This area included municipal buildings, many businesses, hotels, and the C & O train station.

While the installation of sewers and street paving began, residents still believed the Central Land Company should pave most of the streets since they had sold or still owned much of the property in Huntington. Citizen pressure made the Central Land Company willing to pave the streets in Huntington thoroughly, in return for a tax exemption. Henry Clay Simms, a Huntington attorney, lobbied the West Virginia Legislature in that regard. A bill for the motion to that effect failed, and the *Wheeling Intelligencer* noted,

At the instance of Henry Clay Simms, of Huntington, with the object of getting a bill through the next Legislature, whereby the Central Land Company, of Huntington, would be exempt from paying taxes to help pave the wide and muddy streets of that place. The

⁴⁵³ "We Cry For Help," *Huntington Advertiser*, July 16, 1890.

⁴⁵⁴ Sewer Block Maps, Huntington Sanitary Board, Huntington, West Virginia. Block map 40 shows a date of March 1890, block map, 41 shows a date of June 1890, and block map 42 shows a date of September 1890.

same bill, amending the charter of Huntington, was killed at the last session by Prichard of Wayne, who had it placed at the bottom of the calendar.⁴⁵⁵

Having twice failed to get the Central Land Company to pay for paving, the Huntington City Council devised a plan that required residents to pay for a substantial portion of sewerage and street paving called the Huntington Street Paving Bill, which slowed Huntington's public works progress. The Huntington Street Paving Bill was introduced into the West Virginia Legislature in 1891.⁴⁵⁶

Residents responded negatively. The *Weekly Register* noted the beginning of municipal and residential arbitration, and cited a Supreme Court case from Pennsylvania as an example for Huntington residents to thwart city councils plans for street paving: The newspaper noted

The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania has decided on a test case from Pittsburgh, that the city could not collect from abutting property holders, the cost of sewers and street improvements. The city will therefore have to pay \$1,000,000 for recent improvements. This is a pointer for Huntington, whose city council are now trying to get a charter through the Legislature, to do this very thing. It is hard on people to pay city taxes, and then in addition pay one third the street paving.⁴⁵⁷

The *Wheeling Intelligencer* pointed out that, "Senate bill No. 46, for paving the streets of Huntington was made the special order for consideration," on February 04, 1891.⁴⁵⁸ In less than a month the bill passed, and the *Weekly Register* briefly prophesied that the bill would create "endless litigation, will depreciate property and very greatly retard the city's prosperity."⁴⁵⁹ The Huntington Street Paving Bill's passage indicates the city councils' desire to fund public works without a general tax or fee structure.

⁴⁵⁵ "Charges Against Marcum," *Wheeling Intelligencer*, September 05, 1890.

⁴⁵⁶ "House of Delegates," *Wheeling Intelligencer*, February 03, 1891.

⁴⁵⁷ Point Pleasant, West Virginia, *Weekly Register*, January 28, 1891.

⁴⁵⁸ "House of Delegates."

⁴⁵⁹ "Charleston Letter," *Weekly Register*, February 18, 1891.

The amended city charter allowed the municipality to avoid paying for the majority of street paving and sewerage. It stated that

one-sixth of the costs thereof of such grading and paving or grading and macadamizing, shall be paid by the lot owner in thirty days after completion of work on the square in which it is done, and the remainder in five equal annual installments, payable as the council may designate in the ordinance letting the contract for such work, with interest from time of completion aforesaid.⁴⁶⁰

Essentially this means that “two-thirds of the cost [was] to be paid by lot owners.”⁴⁶¹ The remaining one-third of costs for any street paving was to be borne by the city.⁴⁶² The city council thus found a way to shift costs for new public works to private citizens.

Despite some early negative media attention about the Huntington Street Paving Bill, residents continued to pay for sewerage and street paving to combat unsanitary conditions. Between 1890 and 1893, many streets were paved with brick after burying sewers. As with the water system, the 1893 Sanborn maps of Huntington provide valuable sources, indicating which streets were paved and not paved.⁴⁶³ The first sewers and paved streets were built in the center of the city, where commerce, municipal, and railroad matters were conducted.⁴⁶⁴ As the city continued to grow, even during an economic recession in 1893, sewerage and street paving continued at a steady pace, expanding east and west from the center of downtown.⁴⁶⁵ Until 1910,

⁴⁶⁰ *Acts of the Legislature of West Virginia at its Twentieth Regular Session, Commencing January 14, 1891*, (Charleston, W. Va.: Moses W. Donnally, Public Printer, 1891), 5-6.

⁴⁶¹ *Acts of the Legislature of West Virginia at its Twentieth Regular Session*, 5.

⁴⁶² *Acts of the Legislature of West Virginia at its Twentieth Regular Session*, 5.

⁴⁶³ Sanborn Map Company. Huntington, Guyandotte, and Central City, West Virginia, March 1893. Scale 50ft to one inch, (New York, NY: Sanborn Map & Publishing Company, 1893). Sheets 2-11.

⁴⁶⁴ Sanborn Map Company. Huntington, Guyandotte, and Central City, West Virginia, March 1893, Scale 50ft to one inch, (New York, NY: Sanborn Map & Publishing Company, 1893), sheets 1-5.

⁴⁶⁵ The Huntington Sanitary Board houses block maps from 1890 to the 1920's that chronologically shows the installation of sewers and subsequently paved streets.

residents remained responsible for paying two-thirds the cost of sewerage and street paving, though their payments went from five to ten with an interest rate of six percent.⁴⁶⁶

Geography and population concentration determined the starting point for sewers and paving, and economics continued to play a leading role. During the 1890s, the city did not yet have distinctive residential neighborhoods, as houses and businesses intertwined throughout the city. Because of those circumstances, it is unclear if people without the capital to pay for sewerage and street paving benefitted from wealthier neighbors. With a block-by-block pattern established, sewerage and street paving took place in all directions according to Huntington Sewer Maps that were completed in two-year intervals.⁴⁶⁷ By the end of the 1890s, Huntington's population slightly decreased to roughly 12,000 people with a significant portion of the city furnished with sewers and paved streets, fully modern regarding modern sewage and streets.⁴⁶⁸

From 1900 to 1910, Huntington's population almost tripled, from 11,923 to 31,161. With a growing population, residents naturally gravitated away from the center of town, which led to the emergence of subdivisions. The Walnut Hills District, the city's first suburb, was developed around 1903.⁴⁶⁹ As Huntington and its economy continued to grow, city officials and citizens clashed over city beautification and increased infrastructure. Ritter Park, the city's first, opened

⁴⁶⁶ Charter of the City of Huntington, West Virginia, 1909, 40. [Publisher not identified]. Going into effect in 1910, the city assumed the two-third cost of street paving, and residents were responsible for the remaining one-thirds cost.

⁴⁶⁷ Sewer Block Maps from 1890 to 1920.

⁴⁶⁸ See Rufus Cook Map in Chapter One. Though the entire city of Huntington existed on Cook's map as of 1870-71, the main part of the city was occupied from avenues north to south from Second Avenue to the C & O Train Station on Seventh Avenue, and streets running east to west were 31st to 1st West.

⁴⁶⁹ The Walnut Hills District starts roughly on Twenty-Fifth Street and Eighth Avenue going towards Thirty-first Street, and goes as far back to Woodmere Memorial Park, a cemetery. For physical view of Walnut Hills, now referred to as District 7 see map at https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1La892UqUWJsQDEJ1IfTtnZ1bVeM&hl=en_US&ll=38.40617214527436%2C-82.4426575&z=12.

in 1913 and helped open the Southside, a new and major subdivision.⁴⁷⁰ The city's population growth from 1910-1920 increased from 31,161 to 50,177 necessitating further public works.⁴⁷¹

As the Walnut Hills District finished around 1910, the Southside began developing in 1913, and the continued spread of the city included the opening of the Highlawn district which required further sewerage and street paving.⁴⁷² The Highlawn district was finished by 1917. All of these subdivisions benefitted from private enterprises handling the construction of the new neighborhoods as sewerage and street paving were installed by the contracting companies which built the houses and sold the properties to private citizens.⁴⁷³ For several years, public works measures returned to private entities, and Huntington's municipal government benefitted two-fold. The opening of new subdivisions in Huntington marked a turning point in the city's young history as these new neighborhoods helped increase the population, economy and technological network of the city.

CONCLUSION

The rise of Huntington as a city in the early 1870s generated a great deal of excitement as a new eastern urban area rose up and earned the upstart railroad city significant media attention. During the city's first decade, the Central Land Company, owned by Huntington's founders, built the city. As the young city progressed into the 1880s, early migrant residents took on the role of city boosters and organized private companies for utilities. Gas, electricity, and electric

⁴⁷⁰ "Ritter Makes Gift To City Of 12-Acre Tract Of Land Adjoining City Park: City Now Has Sufficient Area For Fine Public Park On South Eighth Street," *Herald-Dispatch*, February 27, 1912. Bryant, "A Cartographic History of Huntington," 19.

⁴⁷¹ Richard L. Forstall, *Population of States and Counties of the United States, 1790-1990*, (Washington, D.C.: Department of Commerce, U.S. Bureau of the Census Population Division, 1996, Part II), 176.

⁴⁷² "Huntington Land Company Will Foreclose: Firm Organized in 1903 Anxious To Sell Holdings," *Huntington Advertiser*, July 12, 1926.

⁴⁷³ "Huntington Land Company Will Foreclose." The Southside subdivision was finished in the early 1920s.

streetcars formed under the entrepreneurship of local city boosters. Although water was an area of public works that fell under the purview of absentee interests, the city council's requirement of a filtration system clearly indicates its participation in that area. From 1883 to 1888, Huntington installed gas, electricity, water, and electric streetcars, positioning the new city as the most modern urban center in the State. Huntington was never behind or really ahead of other cities, but rather flowed along national trends in public works at a steady pace.

When the cityscape mirrored the problems of larger industrial cities in sanitation, mobility, and aesthetics, residents challenged municipal authorities. The unsanitary conditions of the city, the lack of modern sewers, and muddy streets filled with stagnant water created an atmosphere of discomfort and uncertainty. Residents voiced their concerns through the *Huntington Advertiser*. In turn, the newspaper became the tangible voice of local protest. The willingness of residents to enter utility markets for their benefit, and the city's, showed their enthusiasm in modernizing Huntington. While the municipal government's response illustrated general reluctance to impose taxes and fees, private businesses spearheaded public works in the 1880s. The city, seemingly reacting to fiscal constraints, imposed a majority of costs for sewerage and street paving on residents until the city had a complete modern network of sewers and paved streets.

Clearly, private residents played a prominent role in modernizing the city. Indeed, they took the lead role. As with many new cities in the United States during the late-nineteenth century, residents paid attention to the social, cultural, economic, and technological changes that helped transform urban ecologies. Huntington, an eastern city, certainly transitioned from a frontier city to a modern Appalachian city before 1920. Without city boosters investing in utilities, and a growing population from 1891 to 1910 shouldering the costs of public works,

Huntington's subsequent population boom may not have happened.⁴⁷⁴ Huntington's transformation to a modern city was a result of residents who were "bent upon getting ahead in the world, and decidedly western in their energy."⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷⁴See *Acts of the Legislature of West Virginia*, (Charleston, WV: The Tribune Company, 1910), 623-625. Huntington's population increased from 50,177 in 1920, to 75,572 by 1930, and by 1950, Huntington's population reached its peak at 86,353. Population statistics come from "Tri-State History Through The Decades," *Herald-Dispatch*, January 14, 2009.

⁴⁷⁵"Huntington City," *Wheeling Intelligencer*, May 2, 1883.

CONCLUSION

A FORGOTTEN GILDED AGE CITY

“The people have great faith in the future of Huntington, and are looking forward to the day when their city will be the largest in the State.”⁴⁷⁶

The city of Huntington exhibited the sociodynamic transformations that marked the country from 1870 to 1920. Newspapers reported the birth of Huntington, extolled its rise, and paid attention to the city’s physical growth. The new city of West Virginia created a media-blitz for a brief time as journalists traveled to Huntington and provided their thoughts. An 1871 issue of the Richmond, Virginia *Daily Dispatch* claimed: “Chicago has a rival in Huntington.”⁴⁷⁷ Tucson’s *Arizona Citizen* proclaimed that Huntington “promises to be a second Pittsburgh at no distant day.”⁴⁷⁸ A *Richmond Dispatch* journalist enthusiastically wrote: “At last I behold this much-talked-of town, and I am quite pleased with its location.”⁴⁷⁹ All in all, newspaper accounts reported positive views of the young eastern city, despite its initial slow growth. A Virginia newspaper praised Huntington, considering it a “city of magnificent distances, vast capabilities, and great expectations.”⁴⁸⁰

The media blitz that surrounded Huntington in its formative years illustrates a point often overlooked by urban historians. The centrality of railroads further demonstrates the changing social, cultural and economic forces Americans navigated following the Civil War. The planning and building of new cities during the late nineteenth century typically produce images of the American West. The Eastern city of Huntington, rather than experiencing haphazard

⁴⁷⁶ “Huntington, The Second City-The Pride of the State,” Point Pleasant, West Virginia, *Weekly Register*, November 22, 1899.

⁴⁷⁷ “Richmond’s Future,” Richmond, Virginia, *Daily Dispatch*, July 08, 1871.

⁴⁷⁸ “Beyond The Mississippi,” Tucson, Pima County, Arizona, *Arizona Citizen*, December 02, 1871.

⁴⁷⁹ “More Rambles Of A Rambler,” Richmond, Virginia, *Richmond Dispatch*, November 01, 1873.

⁴⁸⁰ “At The Western Terminus,” *Richmond Dispatch*, February 03, 1873.

development, was planned from the beginning, once Collis Huntington and his associates decided upon a suitable location. The well-planned city using the common grid design helped fuel the media blitz. A major theme in early travel accounts of Huntington spoke about the city's easily navigable design of broad streets and avenues. The design of Huntington was a point of interest for internal and external boosters connected to the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad.

As Huntington developed, the necessary elements for enticing mobile Americans took shape in the form of boardinghouses, rental properties owned by the C & O Railroad, and an abundance of materials needed to build homes and businesses. These elements helped form and reinforce class structures in the city as socioeconomically tiered boardinghouses, various prices for town lots, and tenements supplied migrants with geographically distinct places to live. With people coming to Huntington at a steady pace, newspapers focused on the possible fortunes of the untapped natural resources in West Virginia, and available jobs, because the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad nurtured such potentials. Huntington generated inter-city rivalries, and grabbed the attention of national media coverage while setting in motion dramatic changes in West Virginia's subsequent decades. Factors that helped form the city of Huntington are often neglected in outlining the city's importance as an entry point for natural resources. Though the city's founders played a vital role by establishing Huntington, the social, cultural, and city identity was formed by the eclectic mix of people who migrated to the "virgin city of West Virginia."⁴⁸¹

The increased mobility and migratory practices of Americans after the Civil War highlights themes important to understanding how social and cultural practices migrants brought

⁴⁸¹ "Letter From Huntington," Charles Town, West Virginia, *Spirit of Jefferson*, November 12, 1872.

with them shaped early Huntington. The city's founders established a precedent that commerce should reign over sectional conflict, and residents quickly aligned with that sentiment. As a community of strangers came together, so did their social and cultural customs. The formation of benevolent and charitable groups in Huntington to aid the poor, raise money for schools, and combat vice underscore national charity trends of the 1870s in America. Though African Americans experienced exclusion from charitable groups, the church provided a means for social, cultural, and economic support for Black Huntingtonians. African Americans came to Huntington mainly because of the C & O Railroad; the city offered a relatively peaceful atmosphere, although segregation in public schools created early obstacles to equality in the city. Despite segregation in public schools and charitable groups, Huntington's early years produced a community that was largely accepting of diversity.

Residents' anxiety about their children's education prompted action in the community as Huntingtonians organized their efforts to build public schools. Women notably led the first efforts to raise money for school buildings and supplies. While a school for African American children was delayed a year due to funding issues, notable African American pioneers of Huntington pulled together resources that provided a school for the community's African American children in 1873. As the city was being built, residents, for the most part, adhered to the non-partisan rhetoric the city founders promoted that allowed for prosperity, despite the fiscal crisis of 1873. More importantly, the actions of early Huntington residents illustrate that a community of strangers could forge a new urban center during Reconstruction when North and South were still sifting through the ashes of the Civil War. Huntington was not a magic city without problems; crime naturally occurred, and residents had to navigate these avenues of social conflict.

Chapter III scrutinizes crime in Huntington and how its depiction is often overlooked and inaccurate. Crime in Huntington's early years certainly happened, though O.G. Chase, editor of the *Huntington Independent*, avoided reporting on crime until it affected wealthy residents, a result of his focused use of his newspaper to promote Huntington and the C & O Railroad. Reporting crime would have undermined the promotion of bipartisan politics, a relatively peaceful racial atmosphere and most importantly, commerce. Petty vice crimes marked the earliest reports of criminal activity in the city, and a suit brought against a man by a woman generated much excitement, but murders and lynchings occurred that steered the city's national media attention from positive to negative. By 1876, Huntington and the state of West Virginia were considered the frontier, east of the Mississippi.⁴⁸²

More importantly, crime in Huntington during the 1870s was nothing unique. Specific crimes were not exclusive to any geographic location; both crimes generally associated with "the frontier," and urban crime happened in the city. It seems residents pragmatically dealt with vice crimes, until the murder of Marshal Mitchell and the rape of nine-year-old Amazetta Hatfield, opened a sociocultural rift that briefly destabilized due process and the rule of law.

The memory of crime in Huntington finds a peculiar place in the city's history as it is often neglected, and when discussed, inaccurate narratives persist. What the examination of crime in Huntington's first decade helps clarify, is how a diverse mix of Americans perceived their role in contributing to the growth of the city, while combatting criminal activity whether through legal channels or rough justice. Certainly, crime continued throughout the 1880s, but it seems at least, from existing records, Huntington had greater respect for the rule of law.

⁴⁸² "Lynch Law, Cabell County Vigilantes," *Weston Democrat*, Weston, West Virginia, January 31, 1876.

Although violent crimes occurred, the city was in the process of modernizing and attempted to leave behind its frontier beginnings.

Starting in 1880, Huntington formed a modern police department in the city, while it was also on the verge of implementing public works, both steps in leaving behind the city's frontier elements. The primary focus of Chapter IV is on the efforts of residents who transformed the young city through public utilities while paying for street paving and sewerage. For Huntington, public utilities played a crucial role in leaving behind the frontier style city. Telephones, gas, electricity, and running water marked the beginning of Huntington's attempts to modernize in the early 1880s. By 1888, the city had all of these utilities and electric streetcars. The municipal government was not central to Huntington's modernization, as locals formed utility companies which installed gas lines, utility poles, water pipes, and electric streetcars. By 1889, Huntington was the most modern city in West Virginia, having gas heat, running purified and filtered water, electricity, and a public transit system. One of the key features of modern cities was missing. The lack of paved streets and sewers caused drainage problems that created city-wide health issues.

The role of residents introducing public utilities in Huntington further illustrates how some of the earliest Huntingtonians took on city-booster roles in the 1880s. A peculiar dynamic existed in Huntington regarding the city government's execution of municipal responsibilities. A significant portion of the city built by the Central Land Company existed when Huntington was incorporated in 1871. These circumstances may have set a precedent for the city government to consider specific improvements the responsibility of residents. Compounding the issue further, residents reached a boiling point in 1890 concerning the city's inaction regarding paving streets and building a modern sewer system. The city council responded by requiring Huntingtonians to pay for the two-thirds total cost of the crucial public works. Not until 1910 did the city council

amend its charter, reversing the costs, but this only happened after the city was fully paved and had a modern sewer system. Indeed, residents essentially modernized Huntington while the municipal government played a minor supporting role. If not for these attentive residents Huntington's massive population increase from 1900 to 1920 might not have happened.

The media's attention to West Virginia's natural resources and Huntington's role in shipping those resources is an important aspect of why the city was created. In 1873 the *New York Times* wrote about the auspicious future Huntington portended for West Virginia: "There is a very great promise for the future of West Virginia if an outside population can be induced to enter and improve the country. The State has great wealth in coal and iron ore entirely undeveloped; yet the only point where there are many enterprises, outside of Wheeling, is at the new City of Huntington on the Ohio River."⁴⁸³ Huntington being the terminus for the C & O Railroad provided access to the interior of the state, historically difficult to penetrate, and as a result, the railroad could reach virgin forests, untapped coal fields, and iron ore. The *New York Times* also provided details about the growing opulence in Huntington and made a claim for the young city's significance: "In its prosperity, it will build up West Virginia, and may have an important influence in regenerating and modernizing the mother State, Old Virginia."⁴⁸⁴

The fact that newspapers consistently wrote about West Virginia's natural resources showcases the capitalist nature of America in the Gilded Age. The era's rapid industrialization required an abundance of coal, iron, and lumber that West Virginia could provide, and the C & O could ship those resources to market from Huntington. By 1912 West Virginia was the second largest coal producing state in America and remained in the top three coal-producing states until

⁴⁸³ "The Two Virginias," *New York Times*, July 07, 1873.

⁴⁸⁴ "The Two Virginias."

1970.⁴⁸⁵ The significance of Huntington as an inland port helped fuel the last phases of America's industrialization, provided energy to factories across the country and contributed to further urbanization. The connection of Huntington to West Virginia underlines the significance of urban and rural relations often overlooked in Appalachian history. The two geographic categories may be physically adjacent, but often culturally separate. Nonetheless, they are mutually dependent on each other. The C & O Railroad was the connective tissue that created Huntington and changed West Virginia.

The rise of Huntington, West Virginia finds little coverage in Appalachian history and is ignored by the field of urban history. In a state that falls entirely within “Appalachia,” and with three medium-sized cities, Huntington has slipped through the cracks of American history. Though Huntington never became a metropolis like Chicago or Los Angeles, its history is important nonetheless. Without the city of Huntington, it is hard to determine when other railroads like the Norfolk & Western would have entered the state. The C & O Railroad made West Virginia accessible, which allowed other railroad companies to connect to existing C & O lines. Without these access points, the natural resource extraction industry may have been significantly delayed. Historically speaking, West Virginia is synonymous with coal, even going as far to define the state economically, as well as socially and culturally. In many ways, Huntington helped open up the southern coalfields that led to new economic growth in West Virginia.

The energy and efforts from a community of strangers who migrated to an unfamiliar place during Reconstruction to partake in the construction of a fledgling urbanity offers new

⁴⁸⁵ “West Virginia And Maryland Made New Coal Output Records,” *The Coal and Coke Operator and Fuel Magazine*, Volume 17, (Pittsburg: Coal Publishing Company, 1913), 260. Ronald G. Garay, *U.S. Steel and Gary, West Virginia: Corporate Paternalism in Appalachia*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2011), 117-118.

historical perspectives on many levels. Examples include examining the urban-rural interdependencies critical to the natural resource extraction industry in Appalachia, as well as investing in the process of new city formation East of the Mississippi at a time when the typical new American city was in the West. A crucial factor lost to the contemporary memory of Huntington is that it was a city initially intended to stand apart from the North and South as a city for commerce and prosperity, and move forward rather than attempt to continue to fight the Civil War. Like many sound ideas, sometimes things do not go as planned, and peoples' differing social and cultural ideologies caused Huntington to lose sight of its original intentions eventually. The rise of Huntington, West Virginia, in many ways conveys the story of how a small forgotten city contributed to American history.

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University of California, for information on Charles Nordhoff.
<http://content.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/kt7d5nc99c/?order=3&brand=calisphere>.

APPENDIX A: OFFICE OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY APPROVAL LETTER



Office of Research Integrity

August 28, 2017

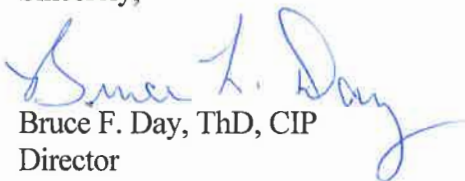
Brooks Bryant
818 14th Street
Huntington, WV 25701

Dear Brooks:

This letter is in response to the submitted thesis abstract entitled "*Iron Road: The Rise of Huntington, West Virginia, 1870-1920.*" After assessing the abstract, it has been deemed not to be human subject research and therefore exempt from oversight of the Marshall University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The Code of Federal Regulations (45CFR46) has set forth the criteria utilized in making this determination. Since the information in this study does not involve human subjects as defined in the above referenced instruction, it is not considered human subject research. If there are any changes to the abstract you provided then you would need to resubmit that information to the Office of Research Integrity for review and a determination.

I appreciate your willingness to submit the abstract for determination. Please feel free to contact the Office of Research Integrity if you have any questions regarding future protocols that may require IRB review.

Sincerely,



Bruce F. Day, ThD, CIP
Director

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